

THE YOUNG PREY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

RUN WHEN I SAY GO
"30" MANHATTAN EAST

THE CON GAME

PURE POISON

GIRL ON THE RUN

END OF A PARTY

THE MISSING MAN

PRISONER'S PLEA

DEATH AND CIRCUMSTANCE

BORN VICTIM

THE LATE MRS. D

THAT NIGHT IT RAINED

ROAD BLOCK

SLEEP LONG, MY LOVE

LAST SEEN WEARING . . .

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THE YOUNG PREY

PROLOGUE I

At two-thirty on the afternoon of Friday, August 30th, 1968, a fifteen-year-old girl named Virginia Hall, living in the small town of Fairchild, Pennsylvania, climbed onto her bicycle and pedaled off on the first leg of a trip to Hell.

Her path, at that point, was over the back roads to the home of her girlfriend, Cessie Mills, and there was nothing extraordinary either about the event or the day. The day was a golden, summer one, warm but not hot. It was the Friday following the Democratic Convention in Chicago and it was the last Friday before school, neither of which fact seemed to mark it for history. As for the event, it was commonplace. Virginia was at Cessie's house as much as at her own and often stayed for meals without even bothering to call home.

Her parents were casual in that regard and her freedom was unrestricted, but with one notable exception. She was to have nothing to do with boys, or with that which attracted boys. Virginia's catechism was: No lipstick, No miniskirts, and No dates, and the punishment for infraction was severe. It was a difficult and unwelcome discipline for she was at the age when being attractive and being around boys were her major, if not her sole interests.

Though the parental taboos hampered her social development, they did not completely deny it. She still managed a share of the boy-girl fun on the sly. She had sipped sodas with the gang, danced to the juke boxes, and had even been kissed. And, if she

couldn't help the plain, sexless dresses her mother made for her, she could put on Cessie's lipstick. Virginia didn't like going behind her parents' backs but a bright new world was calling and the cry was irresistible.

When Virginia turned into the Millses' drive at quarter of three, she found Cessie's brother Tom working on his ancient vintage Buick. Tom was eighteen years old, out of school and working sporadically in the mill, a lean, lanky youth whose jeans fitted him so tightly one almost expected them to split the moment he moved. His hair was curly blond and he wore it halfway down to his shoulders. He also wore long sideburns and sometimes a mustache. Tom was one of the hippies in town. There were some five of them, boys whose parents either couldn't or wouldn't make them cut their hair. All of them had motorcycles and went around in a pack. They spoke a language of their own too, talked about "making the scene" and about "happenings" and used words like "acid" and "pot." Virginia's parents thought the boys were a disgrace and wondered what the world was coming to, but Virginia was sure it was only talk and bluster. They didn't really take trips. Even if they wanted to try drugs, they wouldn't know where to buy them.

"Hello, Squirt," Tom said in greeting and she returned a bright, "Hi," as she went around back. "Squirt" and "Twerp" were what Tom had always called her and she used to hate it when she was little. Now it didn't bother her at all because she noticed that, over the past year, he also looked at her the way she wanted boys to look at her, the way that made her feel female and grown up. Had she known he was going to be around, she would have responded less apathetically to Cessie's call to come over.

Cessie was in the kitchen eating an apple when Virginia walked in. She was a couple of inches shorter than Virginia, she had a round, cute face and short, dark, curly hair. The face was decorated with a generous supply of make-up.

"You want an apple?" she asked.

"Uh uh. That a new lipstick?"

"Uh huh. Want to try it?"

"You bet."

They went up to the second floor and Virginia experimented with the lipstick in Cessie's bedroom, drawing it across her mouth with a skill that would have surprised her parents. It didn't go with her long, thick, chestnut hair but if she noticed, she didn't care. She'd be wiping it off and putting on something else. Cessie had a whole tray of make-up accessories and Virginia had often enjoyed a whole afternoon trying them out.

She got no further than the lipstick this afternoon. A roar of motorcycles sounded up the road and she and Cessie got to the window just as four black-jacketed, white-helmeted youths on four big machines turned into the yard, gunned their motors and killed them. They were the rest of the local hippie element, seventeen-year-old highschool seniors who, with their long hair, black leather jackets, and shiny, silver machines, were much admired by girls.

A girl was with them now, getting off the rear seat of Jock Perkins' machine and Cessie and Virginia gaped when they saw her. She looked older than the boys and wore long straight black hair, a kneelength khaki shirt painted with flowers, three strands of love beads, and a pair of jeans cut off halfway up her thigh. She was bare-footed and bare-legged but what caught the girls' attention was the quite obvious fact that she didn't wear a bra. It was something neither Cessie nor Virginia had encountered in Fairchild before.

"Man," Cessie whispered, giving Virginia a nudge. "Do you see what I see?"

"Yeah. I see."

"How can she have the guts? I'd be scared to death." Cessie wasn't disapproving, like Virginia. She reveled in the racy, gossiping things that went on and was a great rumor factory. "Let's go down and see them," she said, wanting to get closer, wanting to find out who the newcomer was, wanting to see how boys responded to a girl without a bra.

Virginia needed no urging. She had the same aims in mind and was already cleaning the make-up off her face.

When they got outside, the visitors were sprawled on the ground watching Tom work. The four men were prone, the girl sat cross-legged, listening to the banter and chewing the roots of grass.

Virginia and Cessie came around fast and stopped in fancied confusion. "Oh. Tom's got company."

There were greetings from the men but none rose nor gave them a serious glance. The girl smiled at them in a noncommittal way.

"I was just going to pump up my bicycle tire," Virginia said for alibi.

One of the youths, Jerry Fisher, rolled over and squeezed the rear tire of the bike, then the front. "You've got those tires up like rocks, kid. What do you want to put more air in them for?"

Virginia wished he wouldn't call her "kid." Just because he was seventeen and a real husky monster. There was talk that he'd been in trouble, too. That was one of Cessie's stories. He'd stolen a car when he was fifteen, but he was underage and all he'd got was a warning or something. Nothing ever came of it.

"Oh," she said, getting down beside him and feeling the tires herself. "Well, I guess they are." She laughed. "I guess I don't really know much about bicycles."

He was sizing her up. She could feel it. She stood up, righting the bike, and Jerry said, "You really ride that thing?"

He didn't call her "kid" this time and she felt she had passed some test. In fact, there was a different tone in his voice and she sensed he would never call her "kid" again. "Sure I ride it." She tossed her head. "Why not?"

"Get on my motorcycle and I'll give you a real ride."

For a moment her heart stopped. "You mean it?" she asked, turning in awe. She'd never been on a motorcycle before. She'd never been invited.

"Sure I mean it." He climbed to his feet. "Come on, I'll take you for a test spin."

She almost laughed. Would her father ever have a hemorrhage! With boys you can get pregnant, but with motorcycles you can

get killed. What a combination! "Yeah, sure," she said. "I mean, what about Cessie?"

"She can ride with Paul." He gave her his helmet, adjusted it on her head, and helped her onto the rear seat of his cycle. The roar of other bikes starting split the air. Cessie was eagerly climbing onto the back of Paul Deckle's seat, his helmet on her head; and the long-haired flower girl reboarded Jock Perkins' bike in a bored manner. She chose not to wear a helmet.

"Put your arms around my waist and hang on tight," Jerry yelled at Virginia as he kicked the starter pedal and the motor roared. She didn't need any urging and moved well forward so that she could get her arms all the way around his bulky body.

They started with a lurch, spewed stones in the drive, banked steeply into the road, and then he opened her up. Virginia kept her head down, pressing her helmet against the back of Jerry's jacket. It was frightening to go so fast on such a tiny machine but she would choke before she'd let on. If there was one thing a boy didn't like it was a poor sport, a girl who wasn't ready, willing and able to do things.

She looked behind her. Warren Pitkin, the only cyclist without a girl, was next in line, fifty yards back. The others were strung out to the rear. She grinned to show she liked it but she doubted Warren could see. She would have liked to wave but she didn't dare let go of Jerry for even a second.

They made a tour of back roads but, Virginia was relieved to note, they stayed well away from her house. If her folks or her bratty twelve-year-old brother, Gary, saw her, that would be the end—the real end.

They went out into the country then and, as if by plan, Jerry turned down a narrow dirt road and pulled off where a gate in a stone wall led into open fields. The others rolled in beside him, dismounted and, without a word, followed him through to a spot behind the stone wall. The youths sprawled on the grass there; Jerry went to a rock in the wall, tucked something into his pocket and returned, throwing himself on the grass between Jock and

Virginia. He propped himself on an elbow and grinned at her. "So—you like the ride?"

He was being real nice to her. He was treating her like a girl his own age. She nodded and gave him her brightest smile. "No kidding, it was the most!"

"It sure was," Cessie agreed when he turned to her.

Paul Deckle, stretching languorously, said, "Well, man, now we're here. What do you want to do, indoctrinate them?"

Jerry laughed and fished the "something" out of his pocket. It was an old king-size cigarette packet with half a dozen cigarettes in it. He put one in his mouth and Virginia noticed it was different from a normal cigarette. It was longer and thinner and the paper was brownish.

Jerry lighted it, took a deep drag and let the smoke come out slowly. As he did, he passed the cigarette to Jock.

"Is that marijuana?" Virginia asked uncertainly, her eyes wide.

"It's not corn silk," Jerry said and the other boys laughed.

She watched Jock take a puff and pass it on. The girl took it, gazing at it as if it were sacred, then took a slow drag and held the smoke in her lungs as she gave it to Paul. It looked rather put on, but the astonishing thing to Virginia was that these boys actually did smoke the stuff. They really *were* hippies.

They started talking then, passing the cigarette among themselves. Virginia learned that the flower girl's name was Leah, that she was from Chicago and had been involved in the demonstrations there. She told them about it, relating it as a nightmare of beatings and police brutality, of cruelty and excesses, all vented upon peace-loving youths who only wanted an end to war. She was on her way to New York now, she said. She could no longer identify with a city full of pigs and hate and sadism.

Then they talked about Love Power and explained to Virginia what they were seeking. It was a different kind of philosophy from what she got at home but it seemed to make sense and Virginia found herself gaining new insights. Her father viewed hippies with contempt. Her father wanted to go all out to win

in Vietnam including, if necessary, using The Bomb. But these people were showing her the world in a different light. She had thought draft-card burners were cowards for that's what her father had called them. But now Jerry was telling her he would burn his card just as soon as he got it and he didn't look like a coward at all. In fact, as he pointed out to her, it took more guts to stand up against society than to knuckle under. War brutalized people, he and the others insisted and she could certainly see that. She could not fault their logic. Even when she felt there must be something not quite right in some of their views she could not find a flaw in their arguments.

For the most part, she had to agree with these new views and it gave her a new excitement. These people were good people! It was right to fight against a society when that society was wrong!

That was part of the excitement. And part of it too was that these seventeen-year-old boys, and Leah, who was nineteen, were treating her, fifteen-year-old Virginia, like an equal. And she felt like an equal. It was heady stuff but she felt, suddenly, very adult.

They lighted another cigarette and Leah got talking again. There was going to be a big hippie festival in New York City Saturday night in Washington Square. A big post-convention rally. The hippies from New York had all been talking about it. The convention had been a disaster. Both the Republicans and Democrats had shown that they were going right down the line with the society. Despite all the evils of the society, despite all that the hippies and the McCarthyites could do to bring about change, the power structure, meaning the pigs, were determined on business as usual. But the battle was only beginning. Washington Square would see the call to arms, and Leah would be there to answer.

Jerry said in envy, "What a show that will be!"

And Virginia, feeling the excitement, said, "Can you imagine? Thousands of them. All demonstrating for love!"

Jerry got the cigarette back. He waved it at the other youths.

"You know what? We ought to go to it too. Like Leah. If ever there's going to be a scene to make, I say that's the scene."

There was a moment of silence and Jock, lying back on the grass, said musingly, "You know, it's only a five-hour trip."

"I'll bet once you're there you could take another kind of trip too!" Jerry laughed and the others laughed too. It was an in-joke they could enjoy. He had a puff of the marijuana cigarette and then turned and held it out to Virginia.

She looked at it, startled. "Me?"

"Why not? You're one of us, aren't you?"

She swallowed, but her heart flipped at the casual way he included her in his in-group. She was making it with him to a degree she wouldn't have dreamed possible. But a marijuana cigarette? She'd only smoked regular cigarettes three times in her life—two of them with Cessie—and she hadn't even inhaled.

Jerry laughed. "You don't have to be afraid. It won't hurt you."

"I don't know," she said nervously. She was stalling but she knew she was going to have to do it. If she chickened, they'd be reminded that she was only fifteen, after all, and what were they bothering with her for?

"It's easy," he said. "Just suck some smoke into your mouth, then open your mouth and inhale it into your lungs."

She let him hold it for her and sucked the wet end, trying not to take in too much smoke.

"That's right," he said, removing it. "Now suck it into your lungs."

She braced herself and did it fast and all at once.

For a moment she thought she was going to die. She needed air, not smoke, and she coughed violently and almost retched. Jerry pounded her painfully on the back. "Hey, you let it go down the wrong way."

Then the coughing stopped and she was able to breathe. She lay on her elbow panting and now other sensations began. Her head went around and her stomach felt nauseous. She hoped she wouldn't throw up. Not in front of all these boys. She'd rather die.

There was some talk and Cessie was willing to try a puff. "She would," Virginia thought. Cessie would dare anything. She had no sense at all. But Virginia didn't really care. Cessie and the others seemed very far away, as if they were in a dream. She turned and looked when Cessie took her puff and she saw that Cessie cheated. She let out most of the smoke when she went to inhale.

"We could get there by nine or ten o'clock tonight," one of the boys was saying.

"Yeah, but it's tomorrow night."

"So what? We can wander around. Hell, who knows? We might decide to stay."

It was Jock and Leah smiled at him. "That would be nice."

"How about it?" Jerry said and Virginia realized he was talking to her.

"How about what?" she answered carefully. She could speak, behave, see, hear, feel, but everything still had that dream quality.

"You want to go to New York with us to the peace rally?"

"You mean on motorcycles?"

Jerry laughed. "Naw. We'll get a car. We'll drive to New York tonight and see what the scene is."

Her heart stopped for a second. To go to New York where she had never been, to go with these boys and attend that rally? There'd be TV people there and she might even be on television.

"Oh, I would," she said, and then sadly, "But Pa would never—"

Jock said, "So who asks permission to go? You think we're going to go home and say, 'Hey, what do you think? We're lighting out for New York.'? Like hell. We're just going to go."

"Let them miss us when they miss us," Jerry said.

Virginia, a little wide-eyed, said, "But what would I tell them when I got home?"

"Anything you want. Tell them you visited a friend."

Cessie suddenly said, "Hey, tell them you visited me."

Paul said to Cessie, "And you can tell your folks you spent the weekend with her."

They all laughed but Virginia realized it could really be done. Her pa, who raised apples, hardly knew Mr. Mills, who was an executive at the bank. Meanwhile, she and Cessie were constantly switching back and forth, frequently and casually staying overnight. And as long as she was with Cessie, her folks figured she was safe and they didn't even think about her any more. "It might work," Virginia had to admit. "But if Pa ever found out, he'd take the hide right off me. I mean literally."

"Go on, if he thinks you've run away, he'll welcome you back with open arms."

"You don't know my pa."

"That's only because you'd already be home. So you call him in advance—direct dialing like it's from Cessie's house—and you find out his mood. If he hasn't tumbled, you tell him when you'll be home. But if he's found out, then you've got him over a barrel. You play it cool. Maybe you don't ever want to come home again. Maybe you're going to stay in New York and work for love power. He'll come crawling to you on his knees." He turned. "Right, Leah?"

Leah smiled. "Sure. Take me. Practically every week my folks advertise for me in *The Other* and *The Rat* and the other underground papers asking me to come home, or at least call collect, and telling me there's no punishment, that they've got a red convertible waiting in the garage for me, that Sandy had a tooth out but everybody else is fine." She laughed. "It's like getting a letter from home."

Virginia looked at her. "You don't want to go back?"

"To them and their middleclass values? You know how stupid they are? You know how really, unbearably stupid? It's that bit about the convertible. And red yet, because they know it's my favorite color. They're trying to bribe me to come back with a materialistic thing like an automobile. That's exactly the kind of thing I left to get away from."

"Who needs it?" Jerry agreed. "Their lives are lies."

Virginia thought about it—what it would be like to move to New York, not to come back. No more crumby brother getting in

your hair, no more crabby mother who never smiled, who never seemed to have anything to say to her children except "Don't." And Pa, cold, aloof, death on anything feminine for her, death on boys.

But the chances were she and Cessie wouldn't be found out. And if they were, wouldn't the punishment be worth it? Besides, the whole gang wanted her to go and she was still a little woozy from that cigarette. "I'm game if Cessie is," she said.

PROLOGUE II

The expedition to the big city got under way at six that evening. The combined resources of the seven members consisted of a Pontiac sedan produced by Jerry, a full tank of gas and a bit over thirty dollars in cash.

The girls had spent the intervening time keeping out of sight at Paul's house where no one was home. They phoned their mothers and told their tales, and their lies committed them to the venture.

The five-hour ride to New York was long and dreary and though the first glimpse of the Manhattan skyline raised their flagging spirits for a moment, none in the group had much enthusiasm left and Virginia was already wishing she'd never come. It was too late for regrets, though, and she tried to buoy her morale with thoughts of the rally.

It was five of eleven when they crossed the George Washington Bridge, but it took another hour and three stops for directions before they reached the goal of their journey, Washington Square Park. They came upon it at midnight and slowly went once around its perimeter. A few people were strolling its lighted walks, but none looked like hippies.

Jerry found a parking spot on the second go-around and they pulled in to the curb by the southwest corner to survey the situation. Virginia had expected to find crowds of hippies and music all night long. This quiet, arc-lighted expanse of trees, grass and walks, could have been a park back home. It was a letdown

and not just to her. All in the group were equally weary and unexuberant.

"Well, so this is New York!"

They sat for a bit while the boys and Leah had a cigarette and pondered the problem of what to do next. Virginia and Cessie kept very still. It was not for them to venture solutions, or even to acknowledge that a problem existed. Where they went from here was a matter for their leaders to decide.

It was Leah who broke the dilemma. Halfway through her cigarette, she opened the car door and said, "I'm tired. I'm going to get some sleep."

"Where?" Jerry asked.

"On the grass. Grass is for sleeping. Hadn't you heard?"

Jerry, who, despite the length of his hair and the anti-establishment qualities of his ideas, had never slept in anything but a bed in his life, laughed. "Sure grass is for sleeping."

They all piled out and Virginia caught up to Leah who had started across the street. "Where is there a bathroom around here?" she whispered.

Leah laughed. "How do I know? I've never made this town before."

"I mean—what do you do when you have to go?"

Leah shrugged. "Go in the bushes—unless there are better alternatives. What else?"

How socially conscious, homeless protestors handled bodily functions other than the intake of food had never occurred to Virginia before now. She was in the stage of adolescence that breathes the scent of knighthood in flower, when men were bold, brave and courteous, the maidens shy, white of face, and beautiful. Calls of nature, menstruation, and such aspects of existence were not only unmentionable, they were unthinkable. The idea of urinating and defecating away from the appliances designed for such purposes was almost too disgusting to contemplate. The thought of doing it semi-publicly went beyond the pale. "Oh, I couldn't," she said in shock.

"You got a new way of handling it?" Leah asked sarcastically.

"But there must be public—you know—lavatories around someplace."

"Sure there are. There must be a million of them. And if you can find one you don't have to put a dime in, I'll use it with you."

Virginia's heart sank. She didn't have even so much as a cent. She didn't have a purse or a sweater or anything but the dress she wore. "What am I going to do?" she groaned.

Leah was inclined to impatience. "Use the bushes, I said. It's dark. Nobody's going to see."

"But the boys—"

"You don't have to do it in front of them, you know."

"I mean—they'll suspect."

Leah laughed out loud and threw her cigarette away. "Christ, they don't *suspect* you do such things, they *know* you do them."

Virginia flushed. She was aware she sounded like a fool but she knew how she felt.

"Hst," Leah said. "It's the fuzz."

"What?"

"Cops. In the radio car over there. Walk right. Walk slow and natural—like you know where you're going."

Virginia thought she'd been doing that. "What's wrong?"

"If they stop you, you live here. You understand? You live with me. Let me do the talking."

Out of the corner of her eye, Virginia watched the radio car turn and go down the side of the park. "Why would they stop us?" she muttered to Leah. "We're not doing anything."

"You don't ask why the fuzz do what they do. They don't arrest you because you're bad, they arrest you because they feel like it. Maybe they've got indigestion. All I know is, you've got to look out for them. Spot them before they spot you. It's Big Brother watching and that's why we've got to destroy this society. It's the only way people can be free."

The radio car went away without stopping and Leah drew the group around her. In Fairchild, Jerry was the leader. Here, in Washington Square, New York, Leah became the Admirable Crichton. She pointed. "See that building? With the bushes

around it. That looks like a comfort station. We go there. If it's free, we use it. If it isn't, we make other plans." She dismissed them with a wave of her hands. "Get going." The boys went, and she started after.

The young girls followed Leah. She might wear a layer of dirt over her pretty face, her clothes and her body might reek, but Virginia was thankful for her all the same. Leah knew how to guide them in the big city.

The park comfort station, women's entrance at one end, men's at the other, a public phone booth close by, did not require coins and Virginia was spared the horror of using bushes. It was her scant relief.

When they came out, the boys were lolling on one of the benches nearby, smoking cigarettes and assessing their surroundings with what were supposed to be critical eyes. "So," Jerry said when the girls came up, "this place doesn't look too bad. We can sack out on the grass and make like it's real comfortable."

The girls nodded. For the young ones it was well past their bedtime. For Leah it had been a day of long travel, broken only by a four hour lay-over in Fairchild. She said, "What are you guys going to do?"

Jerry shrugged. "We'll sit here for a while. It's a nice night. Maybe we'll walk around a little."

"If you're smart, you'll stick around."

"We won't get lost."

"If you're smart, you'll still stick around."

Cessie said, "If you're going to walk somewhere, I'm going with you. I'm not going to stay here alone."

Jerry shrugged again. "All right, relax. We won't leave you. But it's too early for us. We're not going to sleep yet."

Leah said, "Suit yourself, but I'm sacking out." She stepped over the little edging fence and started across the close cropped grass into the shadows. Virginia and Cessie followed at her heels and watched her pick a spot with a selectivity that suggested it had advantages invisible to them. She stretched out on her back,

tucked her hands under her head and yawned. "Good night, kids," she said. "Welcome to the club."

The young girls said goodnight and got down tentatively on the grass. It was wet. They stretched out on their own backs, imitating Leah's position, unsure whether it was merely Leah's preference or was the most beneficial way of handling sleepouts on grass. Virginia shivered. Her dress was getting wet through and the feel of the moisture on her bare arms was chilling. She wished she'd at least brought a sweater.

Then the mosquitoes started. Virginia didn't dream there were mosquitoes in New York, but they came in hordes, making her swat, itch and scratch. Nearby, Cessie was also flailing away but Leah, off by herself, lay unmoving and apparently oblivious.

Five minutes was enough. "I can't stand it any more," Virginia whispered to Cessie, almost in tears.

"I know. What are we going to do?"

Two more bites decided them. They fled back to the walk.

The boys, slumped on the bench, looked up sluggishly at their reappearance. "What's the matter?" Paul muttered.

"Mosquitoes," Virginia told him and fought to keep hysteria out of her voice. Boys hated hysterical females, complaining females, difficult females. "We simply can't sleep there. There're millions of them."

"G'wan," Jock said. "I'll bet they're not so bad. We're right next to the grass and they aren't bothering us."

"You've got long pants on. Besides, it's cold in the grass. We don't have any coats."

"Cold? This is a warm night."

Virginia bit her lip. She wasn't going to let them see her cry. "Cessie and I've decided," she said as calmly as she could, "that we're going to sleep in the car. We're not dressed for sleeping on grass."

The boys, to her relief, gave her no arguments. They didn't even look displeased.

"Sure, go ahead," they said. "See you in the morning."

Virginia turned, Cessie followed, and they almost ran to the

Pontiac. Cessie, because she was smaller, took the front seat and the steering wheel problem. Virginia got in back and they locked themselves in. The car gave them surcease from mosquitoes but Virginia was still chilled and there was no blanket. She doubled up on the seat into as tight a ball as she could.

Up in front, Cessie said good night and, in a voice not as jolly as usual, "Gee, isn't this a real blast?"

To Virginia it was the most miserable night of her life and never had she loved home and family so much. But you didn't show the white flag, even to Cessie. *Especially* to Cessie for she loved to gossip. Virginia put as much heartiness into her response as she could. "It sure is," she lied.

PROLOGUE III

Virginia woke at six-thirty in the morning, cramped, stiff and cold. But she had survived the night and a morning sun was up to revive her spirits. It made her glad she hadn't whimpered in front of the boys. It made her feel she could endure what the new day would bring.

She peered over the top of the front seat. Cessie was half on her back with her feet dangling on the floor, her mouth open and the air wheezing through with each breath. On her cheeks were the stains of tears and Virginia observed them with shock. Cessie had been crying. "A real blast." That's what she had termed the venture, and then she had lain there in the front seat and wept.

Virginia's heart went out to her. Cessie wasn't all the fun-girl she made out. She had her depths too. And, like Virginia, she kept them a secret and showed the world another face.

Virginia sat back. She twisted and stretched to work out the kinks and get warm. Maybe it wouldn't be too bad today. It would be sunny and mild. The protest demonstration ought to be a high-charged experience. Then, as soon as it was over, they'd be heading back to Fairchild. If she was real lucky, her folks wouldn't know a thing. Even if they did, they might be scared by what she'd done and go easy with the punishment. Maybe in the end she'd be glad she came.

Cessie poked her head over the top of the seat. "Hi."

Virginia smiled at her with real fondness. "Hi."

Cessie rubbed her eyes, virtually removing the telltale smudges

of tears. "Boy," she said brightly, "whoever thought we'd be doing this?"

"Great, isn't it?" Virginia said wryly.

"I wonder if the boys are up." She peered out the window but bushes were in the way. They got out of the car and walked over to see.

The park was totally empty. No one slept on the grass, no one sat on its benches, no one walked on its paths.

"Where are they? Where did they go?" There was a touch of panic in their questions and the way they clutched hands.

They ventured only a little way and then retreated. The park was too empty, too antiseptically clean of humans. They fled back to the car and locked themselves in.

"They'll come back. They have to."

"They can't leave the car."

Despite their attempts at reassurance it was frightening being alone and the two girls spent an uneasy twenty minutes before Cessie saw the four boys and Leah round a corner up ahead. They breathed in relief but regained their cool before getting out of the car to greet them. "Hi," they said casually. "Where've you been?"

Jerry was sour-faced. He flicked a cigarette at the gutter as they came up. "The damned fuzz," he grumbled. "Always bugging people."

"What happened?"

"They closed down the damned park. At one o'clock a whole army of them came through. They drove everybody out."

"They do anything to you?"

"We didn't let them near us. Leah was going to hide, but you couldn't hide a cockroach in that park when they come through. We had to get out."

"Couldn't you go back in after?"

"There isn't any after. They patrol the damned place all night long."

"Gee," Cessie said. "What'd you do?"

"Wandered the streets. We finally napped a little in doorways. Stinking fuzz!"

Leah said, "You should've tried the sidewalk. It's easier to sleep on." She was standing with one hand in the pocket of her short-cut jeans, a cigarette dangling from her lips. She looked somehow haggard and jaded, as if the sidewalk hadn't rested her much.

"So now what are we going to do?" Warren Pitkin asked.

Jerry scowled. "What do you mean what are we going to do?"

"Do we go back or do we hang around?"

"Go back? Are you kidding?"

"I thought you'd had it with this place."

Jerry snorted. "No goddam fuzz is intimidating me. Man, that's what we're here for. That's what we're fighting. Are you out of your skull? What are we going to do? We're going to attend this big protest rally. What do you think we're going to do?"

"But that's tonight. What are we going to do in the meantime?"

"First we get something to eat—something simple and nourishing. And then, well, we walk around and look at hippies. We try to find out how they live around here." Jerry looked up. "Right, Leah?"

She snapped her cigarette butt ten feet into the street. "You can if you want. I didn't come here to look at hippies."

"What do you want to do?"

"I've got to find myself a pad. One night on the sidewalk is one night on the sidewalk but it's not a way of life. Not for me it isn't."

"O.K. I guess we'll do that then."

"Not *we*. Me! That's something I've got to do solo. This is the break-up point. It's been nice traveling with you. I'll love you forever, but the paths go different ways now. You're here for a couple of days. I'm here for maybe eternity. It's not the same. So you go do your thing and I'll do mine. And maybe we'll see each other at the rally."

She looked ready to go and Jerry said, "Well, at least you can stay and have breakfast with us."

She smiled and touched his cheek. She looked a little brighter,

a little less haggard. The sunshine was shaping her up too. "Thanks, but you don't have the money to spare. You'll be lucky if you can put anything in your own stomach and have enough bread to get home on."

She went to each of the boys in turn, pressed her cheek against theirs in parting, then did the same to the girls. Then she was off, up the street, her damp, unwashed shirttails hanging over the short-cut blue jeans, her sturdy, tanned, dirt-stained legs and black-soled feet showing below. She turned, pushed her long black hair over her shoulder and waved. Then she disappeared from sight around the corner.

The boys passed a few favorable remarks about their departed comrade, admired the way she lived up to her philosophy of love, and expected her to get on well.

They washed up in the comfort station, breakfasted on coffee and a doughnut at a nearby food counter, and set out at eight o'clock to explore. The food and sun made them brighter and they could even laugh and joke, but one thing seemed wrong. No matter where they looked, they couldn't find more than one or two long-haired, sandal-shod people wandering the streets. They had thought there'd be swarms.

They searched until ten o'clock and then Jerry queried a bushy-bearded man who, with a petite, long-haired woman, was pushing a stroller with a fat baby in it. He returned to the others with news that the real place the hippies hung out was over in Tompkins Square Park, half a dozen blocks east.

They trudged across Broadway, picked up East Ninth Street and followed that over. They found the park without trouble, but the story there was the same. Old people basked on the benches, nodded in the light, and watched the world go by. Over by the outdoor theater, a Negro youth and a long-haired blonde sat in earnest conversation, but that was all.

They went out of the park onto Avenue B and explored the neighborhood as far as Avenue C but it was out and out slums. Kids played with broken bottles in the street, glass and litter lay on the sidewalks and uncollected garbage stood in cans. Here

the language was primarily Spanish, the inhabitants Puerto Rican. There were still no hippies.

At eleven o'clock they gave up the quest and decided to see the sights.

PROLOGUE IV

Virginia Hall had never been so tired. It seemed to her they had been walking for a week. She was sure they'd covered every street in Manhattan, and all of it on foot.

First there'd been a hike up to Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue to look at the Empire State Building. Then they'd remembered Radio City and found their way there. After that, they'd walked back to Grand Central Station and seen the clock the yippies had torn the hands off in the spring. They'd had coffee and a hamburger there, then they'd taken a look at Park Avenue, the public library, and gone over to the United Nations Building.

That had been Jerry's idea and everybody wanted to do what Jerry wanted to do. At least the other boys did. Virginia only wanted to lie down and rest. And, though Cessie insisted she was having a ball, Virginia suspected she harbored the same desire. Cessie's tearstains told Virginia things about her bosom, lifelong friend she had never realized before and she had the feeling they could become real confidantes if she and Cessie could ever let down their protective walls.

Late in the afternoon they had made a sandwich and Coke do for dinner and followed it with the long walk back to the southern end of Fifth Avenue for the expected excitement of the Washington Square Peace Rally.

It was just seven o'clock when they got there and the park was remarkably quiet. Old people sat on the benches, chess and

checker players pushed their pieces, young couples and occasional hippies strolled the walks.

There were only four policemen that Virginia could see. She thought there would be more. From what television had showed her of the Chicago demonstrations, she expected to find police lines set up, hundreds of helmeted patrolmen with riot guns, tear gas and mace, and rows of police vans drawn up and waiting. Yet there was nothing.

"Maybe it's too early," Jerry said, but Virginia couldn't imagine the police not being ready well in advance. They sat down on the grass and it felt good. Nor did there seem to be mosquitoes.

"Doesn't look like it's going to be much of a show," Paul commented.

"Maybe the fuzz doesn't know about it yet," Jerry countered. "I know what's going to happen. All of a sudden there'll be a flock of buses—whole busloads of hippies—just in from Chicago, and they'll pour out here and take over."

Virginia hoped something would happen, though chartered buses bringing hippies to a rally sounded farfetched. She lay back with her hands under her head and closed her eyes. She thought she could go to sleep on the spot, demonstration or no demonstration, mosquitoes or no mosquitoes, fuzz or no fuzz.

Then Jerry was talking and Virginia realized she had dozed off. "She must have had the wrong place," he was saying. He meant Leah and Virginia, looking around, saw that she must have. It was close to eight o'clock and obviously nothing was going to happen here.

"Why don't we ask a policeman?" Paul said.

That got a laugh. Jerry said, "I don't want the fuzz to even know I exist. They'll crack your skull just because they don't like your looks."

Warren Pitkin said, "Do you suppose it's that other place—Tompkins Square or whatever it is?"

Jerry wasn't sure. Paul said, "Leah isn't here. Maybe she found out different."

"She didn't know New York," Jerry admitted and they all be-

gan agreeing it must be Tompkins Square Park and they'd better get on over.

Virginia struggled to her feet but she had lost her appetite for the whole thing. She wished they could get into the car and head for home. Never mind protest rallies and being eyewitness to street battles between rioters and police. If they left now, they'd be in Fairchild by two o'clock in the morning. She could be in her own bed, between her own sheets, when she next went to sleep. Right then, that appealed to her more than anything in the world. She didn't care what punishment her father meted out so long as she could be home.

But the others were going to Tompkins Square Park and the choice wasn't hers. She braced herself and put on a smile and started off with the leaders. She had established herself as a good sport and she wasn't going to lose her image now.

They completed the trip by ten minutes past eight and could tell at a glance that Tompkins Square Park wasn't the rallying place either. A scattering of people sat on the benches around the Seventh Street entrance, a few men played cards on the stone checkerboard tables, and over by the outdoor theater, four Negro youths pounded African beats on bongo drums before a dozen spectators.

Virginia and the others joined the group around the drummers and listened for a little. It was a slice of a far-from-Fairchild life. It was something for their troubles, but it wasn't what they'd come to New York for.

Jerry and Paul went over to question a long-haired boy and girl about the rally but Virginia knew with inner certainty there wasn't going to be one. There wasn't ever supposed to be one. She saw herself and the others as six stray teenagers who had no more business being in New York than they had had in coming. It was one flop of a weekend, all right. Two miserable days away from home and some pretty severe punishment to expect when she got back. That was the irony of it all. The weekend had taught her all the lesson she needed. She didn't need the punishment too.

"You all new in town?"

The voice was right next to her, loud against the drums, and Virginia jumped around. Its owner was a tall, dark-skinned Negro with a muscular build and an aggressively friendly manner. His blue jeans came only halfway down his calves, his denim shirt was half open down the front and the sleeves were cut off above the elbow. His hair was thick and bushy, his grin wide and welcoming, but there was something predatory about his face.

His question was directed at the group but his eyes were on Virginia and she stammered trying to answer. Then Jock spoke up. "Yeah," he said. "That's right."

The big man looked them all over. He grinned again. "My name's Samson." He paused and then added, "Like in the Bible."

Jock told him his name and the two shook hands. Warren did the same and then the girls, but Virginia spoke hers so softly Samson had to ask twice. She told him and moved closer to Jock.

Though Leah had talked the philosophy of loving everybody and sharing everything and Virginia knew this was the way she should feel about the newcomer, she nevertheless wished he hadn't intruded. She didn't like the way he looked at her either. It was the look she was always so happy to evoke in boys too. But she didn't want it from him. And she didn't know why. Was it because his skin was black?

She had never regarded herself as prejudiced. There was a Negro family in Fairchild. Rick, the third child, was in her class and she never even thought about the color of his skin.

But now this tall, bushy-haired Negro, who must be over twenty, who had this ugly look in his face, joined them and she wanted to draw away. She fought the feeling because she was opposed to bigotry. "He's just as good as I am," she told herself. "He's entitled to everything I'm entitled to."

Samson was speaking again, addressing them all. "You know your way around?"

This time no one else volunteered so Virginia said, "Yes. Pretty well."

"You looking for a good time?"

Jock said, "We're looking for the rally."

"What rally?"

"We heard there's going to be a rally."

Samson shrugged. "You wantta take a trip? I can get you a trip."

Jock said, "Thanks, but, uh, I don't think—"

Samson didn't let go. "It's no trouble. You just put yourselves in my hands. I'll take care of you fine. I can get you anything you want and it won't cost a cent."

Virginia said, "No, we—"

He grinned but it frightened her. He urged them again. "No strings. I just like you kids, that's all. I want to do something for you. I wouldn't do it for just anybody but I could tell right off that you're the kind who'd appreciate a favor."

Then Jerry and Paul came back, rescuing them without knowing it. There was no rally, they said. There never was going to be one. Nothing like a rally had been organized at all and there was no more point in hanging around. The thing to do was go back, get into the car and head for home.

Virginia went weak with relief.

PROLOGUE V

The trouble was, Samson didn't go away. He shook hands with Jerry and Paul and told them his name. "Where're you heading?"

"Washington Square. We got our car there."

"That's where I'm heading." He fell in step with them.

Virginia let them lead and dropped back near Jock. She overheard Jerry say they had a lot of driving to do, but Samson wasn't discouraged. He talked earnestly about trips, trying to get him interested.

Cessie, just behind, perked up her ears and moved closer. "What's it like, Samson?"

"It's great," he told her as they crossed a street. "It's the most. It's like you're God. If you ain't been turned on, you ain't lived."

"Gee, it really sounds like something."

Virginia hoped Cessie was kidding. She must know that LSD was very dangerous. You could blow your mind for life. Virginia had read about such things. Cessie must have too.

"You know where to get LSD?" Jerry asked.

"Sure. Or speed, goof balls, pot, anything."

"It must be expensive. I mean, pot is twenty dollars an ounce. But they don't give you full weight. I mean a nickel bag and you only get a sixth of an ounce, not a quarter."

"I can get it for you free. I can get you free LSD. I know where."

Virginia swallowed. Would they not be starting home right away? Would Samson talk the boys into taking a trip? What

would she do if the others wanted some LSD? She wouldn't take any herself, no matter what.

Jerry, thankfully, wasn't interested. "Nah," he said. "When I take a trip, things have to be right. Right atmosphere, friends around."

Samson tried to tell him he'd be with friends, that he himself would stay with him and help him over the rough spots. But Jerry and Paul shook their heads. They weren't going on trips. They were going to pick up their car and head for home.

When he couldn't persuade the boys, Samson dropped back and tried his hand with Virginia and Cessie. What did they want to go home for? This was freedom. Here you lived the way you were meant to live before society burdened you down with rules.

But he had even less luck with them. Virginia wouldn't stay if she could pick up goldpieces in the street.

By the time they reached Washington Square, he had lost his smile and his mouth had developed an ugly twist. He said good-bye at the corner and told them he was going off to find a groovier group. His farewell was sullen but Virginia's was warm with relief.

They watched him depart down the paths and then they walked along the sidewalk to where they'd left the car.

"Hey, what the hell?"

That was Jerry. He stood with his hands on his hips staring at where his car had been parked. It was gone and another was in its place.

"Dammit," he said, "it was parked right here."

Jock said, "You're sure this is the place?"

"Yes, damn it. I know damned well it was. Right along here near this corner."

"Maybe we've got the wrong corner," Paul said.

"No. The arch was over there. The girls—you slept in the car last night. Wasn't it right here?"

Cessie said, "I don't know—maybe," but Virginia did know and the knowledge made her sick. The last thing in the world that could happen had happened. Someone had stolen their car. All

the doors locked, the windows up, and somebody had stolen it. The more desperate she became to get out of this town, the more she was stopped. It was as if Fate wouldn't let her go.

The boys decided they'd walk all around the park. Maybe they didn't remember where the car was. Virginia followed but she scarcely looked. She knew one didn't move a tightly locked car from a parking space just to put it in another space.

It took them twenty minutes to return to their starting point and it was nearly nine o'clock. Darkness had fallen, the pale of the sky was turning black, and the arc lamps in the park glowed with their steely, blue-white glare.

"God," Jerry said, "it's just gone. Now what are we going to do?"

A silence fell that no one else broke. Virginia said, "We'd better report it to the police."

Jerry stared at her. "Are you crazy?"

"What's crazy about it?"

"Can you see the bunch of us walking into the police station with the story that our car is stolen? They'll ask questions and it'll all come out—who we are, where we're from. They'll be arresting us as runaways."

"Hey, yeah," Paul said. "What about crossing state lines with girls? I've heard about that one. That's about the worst thing you can do."

"They're minors, too. That's even worse."

"But nothing happened to us," Virginia said. "I mean, I know what they mean, but that's not what we did it for. I mean, for immoral purposes."

"You just try to make them believe that. You saw what they did to the hippies in Chicago. So if we go in there, they're going to beat up on us first and ask questions afterward. Going to the cops is out."

"But you're going to have to, sometime. I mean, you can't just let the car go—let whoever stole it keep it."

"Why not? It's insured. All cars are insured." He scowled. "For-

get it, will you? Forget the car. What counts is how do we get home?"

"How about a bus?" Cessie suggested.

"We don't have enough dough for *two* fares, let alone six. We might not have enough for one, even."

Jock said, "Why don't we steal a car?"

Jerry snapped his fingers. "Now why didn't I think of that?"

"No," Virginia cried out. "You can't."

Jerry scowled at her again. She was making herself very unpopular, but she didn't care. All she could think of was the boys getting arrested for car theft, and she and Cessie being held as accomplices or whatever it was. God, it would be like Bonnie and Clyde. Jail and ruin were staring her in the face.

"What do you mean we can't?" Jerry was saying. "It's the only way."

"They'll catch you. They'll put us all in jail."

"No they won't."

Jock said, "We'll be back in Fairchild before the owner even knows it's gone."

"We're not stealing it," Jerry said. "We're only borrowing it for a little while. They'll get it back none the worse for wear."

"No," she said adamantly. "I won't ride in a stolen car."

"Oh yeah?" Jock snorted. "What do you think we came here in?"

Virginia stared at him. "That was a stolen car?"

"You think Jerry owned it? You think Jerry owns a big car like that? Or maybe his folks owned it and they said, 'Sure, Jerry. You can take the car to New York for the weekend. Be our guest.'?"

"Who'd you steal it from?" Virginia breathed.

"I don't know," Jerry said irritably. "I wouldn't take a car from somebody I knew. But now you see why we don't go to any police station? It's probably the police who towed it away. In fact, they're probably on the lookout for us right now."

Motivated by that thought, they moved into the park and gathered around a bench. Something had to be done and the

boys still saw "borrowing" a car as the only solution. Virginia fought blindly against it, petrified with fear.

Finally Jerry said, "All right, Ginny, there's one other way to get out of here. You can call your old man collect and get him to send us some bread for bus fare. You want to do that?"

She trembled at the thought but it beat going to jail. "I'd rather do that than steal a car."

"O.K." Jerry got up. "There's a booth over by the comfort station. You can call from there."

PROLOGUE VI

"Yeah," Virginia could hear her father say to the operator. "I'll accept the charges. From New York, huh? All right, I'll take the call." Then the operator was telling her to go ahead.

The charade was over now. There could be no more pretending she had stayed at Cessie's house. This was a call from New York City her father was paying for. "Hello, Pa," she said tremulously.

There was a moment's pause and then he answered in a low voice that could curl steel. "You lousy whore. You ran away with boys, didn't you? And now they've left you!"

"Pa," she said desperately, "you don't understand. It's not like that."

"I just found out. Mrs. Mills just called Ma—not fifteen minutes ago—to say for Cessie to come home. She thought she was staying with us. You know why?"

"Pa, I can explain—"

"Oh, you can explain? How? With what? Another lie? Cessie was supposed to be at our house. And do you know where we thought you were? At Cessie's house. BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE YOU TOLD US YOU WERE GOING TO BE!"

"Pa, please!"

"And I discover we haven't raised a daughter in this family. We've raised a liar in this family. And worse than a liar—a WHORE. That's what we've raised in this family. A WHORE!"

"Pa!" She was in tears. "Please, Pa—"

"You heard me! You went with boys, didn't you?"

"Pa, it's not what you think."

"Did you go to New York with boys or didn't you?"

"Yes, but it's not what you think."

"And they used you and now they've left you. That's right, isn't it?"

"Pa! Honest to God, nothing happened. I swear it. Everything's all right."

"Everything's all right, is it? Mr. Mills has just called the sheriff to announce that his daughter and my daughter have disappeared. He's just had to tell the county sheriff that our daughters have run away together. And we don't know where they went. Or why. But now I'm beginning to find out. You went to New York and I know very well it wasn't done by the two of you alone. Because you don't have enough money, and Cessie doesn't have enough money. That means somebody paid your way. And only MEN pay girls' ways anywhere. And for only ONE purpose!"

"Pa, I keep telling you. It's all right. Nothing happened. Nothing was ever supposed to happen!"

"And we've had to admit as much to the sheriff. He knows you're missing. We reported you missing."

"Tell him it's all right. We're coming home."

"Oh, we'll tell him. But don't think *he* won't know what's going on."

"Nothing went on, Pa. I swear to you—"

"Now you're going to get your ass home just as fast as you can get. And the first thing I'm going to do is have you examined. And I guess you know where you're going to be examined and what for?"

"Yes, Pa, but all we did was come to a peace rally—"

"A what?"

"A peace rally—to stop the war in Vietnam."

"A PEACE rally? You mean a SURRENDER rally! Of all the ungrateful, unpatriotic children— Now I'm telling you, girl, you get home here and I mean just as fast as you can. You and Cecily both. You hear?"

"Pa, that's what I'm trying to tell you. We can't. We don't have any money."

"So the boys you went with took you in to the big city and deserted you, huh? Didn't I tell you about boys? Didn't I—"

"Pa, that's not it. They're here, but they don't have any money either. That's why I'm calling. We need some money to get home on. We want to come home but we don't have any money."

"How much money do you need?"

Virginia didn't know. She leaned out of the booth for a conference. Jerry suggested a hundred dollars to be on the safe side.

She blanched and swallowed but she reported the amount, timidly, into the telephone.

Mr. Hall's voice was incredulous. "A hundred dollars?"

"Well, there are six of us and—"

"Six of you? Listen, you knucklehead, if you think I'm paying— Those boys you're with, if I get my hands on them, I'm going to throw them in jail. That's what I'm going to do for them. I'm only sending money for you and Cessie to come home on and never mind telling me how much, because I'm going to call the bus company and find out the fare and I'm wiring you one-way passage for two and not one penny more. So you get over to Western Union and wait for it and then you get on the very first bus home and if you aren't on it, you're gonna be mighty sorry. You hear me?"

"But the others, Pa. They don't have anything."

"I don't care about them. I'm telling you what you're going to do. Now that's an order and I mean you better obey!" He slammed down the phone so it reverberated in Virginia's ear and left her helplessly holding a dead receiver in her hand.

PROLOGUE VII

She came out of the phone booth dazed, discouraged, and fighting back tears. It was the low point of her life and she believed nothing could happen to make matters worse. But something could and it had and her heart sank still further. The big Negro named Samson was back.

"I thought you cats were so hot to get home," he was telling the others, but his eyes were on her and she shriveled inside.

Cessie and the boys gathered around then, wanting the results of the call. She bit her lip, managed to keep her voice steady, and gave them the bitter news. Bus money was coming, but it was for only two.

"So now what?"

"Don't worry," Jerry said. "We'll work it out."

Samson cut in. "You can't do nothing till tomorrow. So first off you need a place to sleep."

Jerry said, "No, not that. We need to get these girls—"

Paul said, "We should've stolen a car. That's—"

"No," Virginia said firmly. "That's the worst thing we could do."

"You gotta have a place to sleep," Samson insisted. "You're wasting time. There won't be nothing left."

"The hell with that," Jerry told him. "First we're going to put the girls on a bus, like her father wants. We'll worry about ourselves after." The others murmured assent and Virginia could have kissed them all.

Jerry started to say, "We'll go over to Western Union right

now—" but Samson cut him off. "Man," he said, "you can't do that. You can't get that money till tomorrow."

"How come?"

"Western Union's closed."

"What?"

"I said Western Union's closed. It closed at six o'clock."

They'd never heard of such a thing and they stared at him dumfounded. "It can't be."

"You think I don't know what I'm talking about? I live in this town and I'm telling you Western Union ain't gonna be open till nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

They were stunned. They thought telegraph offices never closed. But they saw no reason why Samson would lie and they groaned at the news. "Now what are we going to do?"

"Why don't you do like I been telling you?" Samson said. "Get a bed."

"Where?" Jerry said disconsolately. "With what?"

"Where?" Samson laughed. "Lots of places. There're beds all over."

Jerry showed interest for the first time. "You know of some?"

"Sure. I put up runaways all the time. People come into town and they don't know nobody. Like you. I fix them up."

The youths began to feel relief, but Paul was wary. "For how much?"

Samson snorted. "For nothing, man. No charge. It's just to help you out. That's the way hippies are."

The relief became general. Jerry said, "That's great."

Jock said, "You're a good man, Samson."

Samson went on with it. "Now who's got some paper and a pencil? I'm gonna have to split you up, y'hear? I can't put you all in the same pad. You unnerstand that?"

"Yeah, yeah. That's all right." Jerry produced a scrap of paper and Samson wrote on it by the light from the phone booth. He paused and said, "Now this place. This guy can take four and the other place is my sister's place. She can take two. But she don't want two men. You know what I mean? She's got a six-year-old

kid and they're all alone. So she don't want two men. It makes her nervous. So two girls or one girl and one man. You dig?"

Virginia dug all right, and she broke into a cold sweat. "God," she prayed silently, "please let Cessie go," but she knew it wouldn't be Cessie. Cessie only dared what she wanted to dare and for this she'd play helpless. Virginia would have to be the strong one, the good sport, the girl who wouldn't chicken, the girl left holding the bag.

They talked and Virginia even suggested that Cessie and Jerry be the ones. But it came out as she knew it would. Cessie would stay with the others and she and Warren Pitkin would go with Samson—Warren Pitkin, the most timid of the boys. To Virginia it was as if the hand were being played by Fate.

Samson gave the address paper back to Jerry. "It's down that street," he said, indicating nearby Thompson. "Go down to West Houston and turn left. You just keep following that till you come to it."

There were goodbyes and the arrangement that all would re-assemble under the arch at nine sharp the next morning. Then Paul and Jerry, Jock and Cessie started off, leaving Virginia and Warren standing small and alone beside the big, hulking Negro. At the corner of Thompson the departing foursome turned for a final wave. Jerry was the last to gesture and the paper with the address caught the light in his upraised hand.

Virginia waved back disconsolately. She felt despair and would have given anything not to have to go with Samson. But there was no help for it and she did the best she could. She straightened her back and put on her smile and made ready beside Warren.

Samson led them down side streets to an uptown subway kiosk. He paid their way through the turnstiles and they boarded a local with plenty of seats. She sat with Warren, crowding close, while Samson hung on the straps in front of her. He was more alive now, more eager, but less inclined to talk. All Warren could get from him was that his sister welcomed strangers and put them up all the time. Virginia stared out of the windows and tried not to see the way he looked at her.

They changed to an express at Fourteenth Street and went rapidly for long stretches, stopping and going on for other long stretches and this increased her nervousness. Miles of track were rattling under their wheels and the train was taking them far from Washington Square into totally unfamiliar territory.

Finally he took them off and led them out and they climbed the stairs into a different kind of Manhattan. Here the buildings were five and six floor tenements of brick and stone, one against the other with only an occasional alley between. Stone steps and iron railings led to high porches. Litter cluttered the sidewalks and wheelless, abandoned wrecks of cars cluttered the streets.

All the people Virginia saw were Negro and she felt uneasily conscious of the whiteness of her own skin. She clung close to Samson here for though he had disturbed her before, he was now her haven.

They crossed more streets and went down more blocks. She saw a sign that said Fifth Avenue and it startled her. Was it the same Fifth Avenue that ended at the arch at Washington Square? The other sign said 130th Street. If she went back a hundred and thirty blocks, would the arch be there?

They turned right at the next corner, starting down a long block. Samson nudged them. A prowling car was coming their way. "Duck," Samson said and moved them behind a parked car. They heeded and bent low. A young white couple in the middle of Harlem? The police would surely stop and ask questions and Virginia knew she and Warren couldn't fool them. Instead of going back to Fairchild in the morning, she'd be sitting in a jail cell, held as a runaway, with word sent to her father and scandal all over town. She'd done enough. All she wanted now was to return home as quickly and quietly as possible, take her medicine and get back to the normal pangs of life.

The car went by, down to Fifth Avenue, through the green light and along the next block. Samson gave a signal and they started on again.

They went but a short distance before he stopped at the steps to one of the high porches. "This is the place," he muttered and

put out a restraining hand to Warren. "You wait here. I take Ginny up first, then come for you."

Warren swallowed and nodded. He didn't know what else to do.

Samson took Virginia's arm and led her up the steps to the door. The hall inside was narrow and went through to a staircase that doubled back. The front light was out but a dim bulb shone down the stairwell. The walls were brown, with the plaster chipped and broken. There was rubbish in a corner and the battered frame of a baby buggy. On the stairs was the smell of urine.

They climbed to the second floor and then the third, Samson holding Virginia's elbow tightly, moving her quickly. They went on to the fourth and around to the stairs that led to the fifth. There was a door beside them and when Samson stopped at it, Virginia saw a cockroach race across the wall to cover.

Samson turned the knob and pushed the door wide. He still held Virginia and thrust her into the room ahead of him. It was a single, fifteen by twelve foot space, stretching to the left where a curtainless window opened onto a fire escape. The only light was that from the hall but it was enough for Virginia to see that the room was empty except for a lot of litter and for something that looked like a mattress on the floor.

As she turned, Samson slammed the door behind him and the room went black. He grabbed her and kissed her. His free hand seized the neck of her dress and the strap of her bra and wrenched at them.

"No—what—?" It couldn't be real. Something crazy was happening. She pushed at him to make him get away. Then her dress and straps ripped wide and he thrust his big hand down inside. She let out a piercing scream.

But he wouldn't stop. He tore at her clothes in a frenzy. She screamed and screamed again.

"Shut up." He paused long enough to shake her. "Shut up."

But she couldn't shut up. She couldn't do anything but scream. She couldn't stop screaming.

He hit her. He hit her in the head so hard she crashed into the

wall. For a moment everything went black. Then she came reelingly aware that she was swallowing blood, that she was in the big man's arms, and that he was tearing at her clothes again.

She struggled, feebly at first, then more frantically and her screams were cries for help now rather than peals of panic.

He swore at her. He hit her again. He hit her in the stomach and she thought she would faint. He hit her again in the body and she sank to the mattress. She couldn't scream any more. She could scarcely breathe. Her right arm couldn't move and she had never known such pain. She couldn't bear to be hit again. She thought she could stand anything but that.

He didn't hit her. He got down on the mattress and clawed at her clothes. The dress went and the rest of her bra. She gasped and pushed at him but she had no strength.

He tore her slip off with one wrench and went for her pants, trying to strip them down. They were all she had left.

Through glazed, half-conscious eyes, she could make him out in the near blackness. He wasn't a man. He was a wild-eyed, foamy-mouthed animal.

"Daddy, Daddy," she moaned. "Help me."

CHAPTER I

The dormitory room of the Homicide Squad, Manhattan North, was pitch black when the phone rang. It was a shrill peal that would waken the soundest sleeper but a soft ring would have done as well. The three men sacked out there were prepared to be awakened.

They were standing the night duty and, as the name of their squad implied, their business had to do with killings in northern Manhattan. Every outright murder, every questionable death, and every assault case wherein the victim might later die—anywhere from roughly Fifty-ninth Street to the northern tip of Manhattan—would bring them out. They were members of only one of seven New York City Homicide Squads but theirs was the busiest and the three sleeping men had already caught two killings and one crib death that night. They had been up till two o'clock, they had slept but two and a half hours, yet all three opened their eyes the moment the phone cut loose.

Sergeant Grannis, the leader of the trio, rolled onto an elbow and groped for the lamp on the phone table beside him. He was a lean Negro six-footer with tan skin, black hair, and a close-cropped mustache. He blinked in the light, swung his feet over the side of his cot and mumbled into the phone.

The other two men in the room, Detectives Ray Ecklin and Frank Sessions, were white. Ecklin, like Grannis, sat up, but Frank Sessions stood. He lighted a filter cigarette by reflex action and

looked at his watch. "Jesus," he muttered. "It's four o'clock in the God damned morning."

Grannis was wearing gaudy blue silk pajamas but Sessions slept in his underwear. He went to his locker and stared at his gaunt face in the mirror on the inside of the door.

Ecklin watched him with amusement. "And what time did you expect it to be at this hour of the day?"

"Christ, he's a comedian," Sessions said, pulling down his lower lids to see how bloodshot his eyes were. "As if the hour isn't bad enough."

"Just cheering you up." He nodded at Grannis taking notes. "Since it appears you're catching one."

"The second one tonight," Sessions grumbled and started to get into his clothes. It was his turn again and though Grannis hadn't passed the word, he knew they would be going out. "Son of a bitch."

"Two in one night. There ought to be a law."

Sessions slipped into a scarcely wrinkled shirt. His expensive trousers were hanging on an inside hook, his rich looking jacket suspended on the outside of the locker door. Frank liked the look and feel of good clothes and since his one venture into matrimony had ended in divorce some fourteen years before, his money was his own and he could indulge his fancies. In addition to clothes, the fancies included, in order of preference but not quality, women, food, liquor and books.

He took a drag on the cigarette and laid it on top of the locker. "It's not the number," he complained. "It's the time. You'd think these people who report DOA's would at least have the courtesy to wait till the morning shift comes on."

Ecklin said, "It's probably a three-day-old one they've been saving just for you."

"Jesus, if there's one thing I hate, it's a cheerful voice this time of day."

Grannis put the phone in the cradle and scowled at his notes. Sessions took another drag on the cigarette. "What've you got, Sarge?"

"A questionable. Looks like a jumper except that she's young, nude and white and she's over in the two-five."

Ecklin laughed and got up. "A white girl in the two-five? That's not only questionable, that's downright mysterious."

"Who phoned it in?" Sessions wanted to know.

Ecklin butted in. "Don't tell him, Sarge. He'll kill the bastard for not waiting till eight o'clock."

Grannis grinned. "It's all right, Ray. Whoever it was was too smart for Frank. He called in as Mr. Anonymous."

"Jesus, everybody's a comedian." Sessions took a drag on his cigarette and put it back. "What about Lyman? Has he been called?"

Lyman was the homicide medical examiner on duty that night and Grannis said, "Lieutenant Yucker called the M.E.'s office. He didn't speak to Lyman direct."

Sessions buttoned his shirt sleeves, felt in his jacket and took out a card from his wallet. The medical examiner's office would notify the duty M.E. but Frank had a passion for personal contact. He picked up his cigarette, dialed Lyman's Long Island number from the card, sat down on Grannis' cot and scanned the notes on the sergeant's pad.

"Doc," he said, mashing out the cigarette. "Frank Sessions again. You getting any sleep tonight?" He laughed at Lyman's reply and said, "You hear about the jumper? Yeah. Sixteen West One hundred and thirty-first. That's the place. And I guess you got the word—young, white and nude. You know what that spells, don't you? . . . All right, we'll see you there."

He hung up and rubbed tired eyes. "About three quarters of an hour," he announced. "What about photo?"

Grannis said photo had been called.

Ecklin said, "What's this, three trips Lyman's made in tonight? He should keep an apartment in town."

It had been three trips for Lyman. One was for the first of the two homicides Sessions and Ecklin had caught, the second was for the crib death he'd called natural. Now there was the new case of death from a fall.

Of the earlier homicides Frank's was the simpler. A druggist on Eighth Avenue had shot and killed one of two holdup youths, the youth staggering around the corner to collapse and die in an alley while his unidentified companion fled.

This had taken place in the jurisdiction of the thirty-second detective squad and though there was nothing complex about the case, it was time-consuming. The druggist had to be brought in, the district attorney persuaded to come out with a stenotypist to take a statement. The druggist had to surrender his revolver, which bothered him almost as much as having killed the youth. How soon could he get it back, he wanted to know, for he didn't want to operate a store in that area without a gun.

As for Ecklin's homicide, it was the death of a man in the hospital from injuries received in a beating four days before. It had been listed as assault but now it became homicide. There was no problem over the identity of the perpetrator for there were witnesses. What wasn't known was his whereabouts.

The cases weren't complex but the details had kept them busy half the night. Now, since the other two members of their team were off the block, John Kelley on vacation, and Mike Connager on assignment to the D.A.'s office preparing a case for trial, Sessions was catching his second DOA of the night.

It could have been worse. The first case could have been an open one with long hours of investigative work necessary before the point could be reached of either making an arrest or exhausting all leads. Little more would be needed from Frank on that one and he could devote his full attention to the new death, or at least what attention he could muster at 4:30 A.M. after two and a half hours of sleep.

The men finished dressing and Sergeant Grannis, knotting his tie, led the way across the hall and opened the door of Boro Headquarters. The room beyond was a large one, broken into smaller segments. Four offices were on the right side overlooking 100th Street. The first was for Assistant Chief Inspector Arthur Moran, the head of the Detective Bureau for Manhattan North. The second was for the district captain, the third for Lieutenant

Hugh Farquhar, the homicide squad's C.O., the back one for the burglary squad.

As for the rest of the space, there were three reception desks near the front along with appropriate file cabinets and lockers. The section behind was a squad room for homicide detectives and at the back was additional space for burglary and a place for the Tactical Police Force (TPF) to muster.

The room was empty except for a giant Negro detective stretched out on a borrowed couch by the desks and phones. He had been a professional football player named Jerry Long and it was legend in the NYPD that when Jerry Long hit a door it was, Bang—no door. He was dozing in the brightly lighted room but he opened his eyes and sat up when the detectives stepped in. "You got one?" he said, referring to the call which had rung in his room as well as in the dormitory.

"Yeah. In the two-five." Grannis told him the address and said they could be reached at the Twenty-fifth Detective Squad.

Jerry wrote it down, laid his head back and, with a careless wave, closed his eyes again.

The homicide men left him in peace, went down in the elevator, walked through the quiet Twenty-fourth Precinct Station, and out the front door to a black Plymouth sedan angled in at the curb.

CHAPTER II

It was not quite five in the morning when the black Plymouth, listed on the books as police car 254, turned left off Madison Avenue onto West 131st Street. An unmarked sedan and a green and white radio car with its dome light flashing, were double-parked halfway up the block. On the sidewalk a small group of curious bystanders, all of them Negro, were gathered and talking.

Ecklin parked behind the radio car and the men got out. Grannis checked building numbers on the glass semicircles over the doors and said, "This one's it." Sessions and Ecklin nodded and looked over the rest of the neighborhood. The buildings on both sides of the street were five story tenements in a solid phalanx—from the shops on Madison Avenue to the shops on Fifth. There were stone steps to high stone stoops with fenced off areaways to basement doors beneath.

"How do you get out back?" Sessions asked and one of the spectators pointed at the stoop and said, "In there and down the cellar."

The three detectives went up the steps and encountered a uniformed sergeant and a patrolman coming out. Grannis stopped to talk but Sessions and Ecklin went into the small entry hall, found the door to the stairs and went down.

There was a corridor at the bottom, lighted with a naked bulb, which led through to stone steps and a door at the back. There was a side corridor on the right and, on the left near the steps, an

apartment door where a young, husky detective was talking to a lean, stooped, gray-haired Negro.

The detective paused to hold out a hand to the newcomers and introduce himself as Ernie Grinold, Detective Third Grade. He called Sessions and Ecklin by name and said he was catching the case. The man he was questioning was the super, Gus Pardee.

Sessions wrote in his notebook and said, "What've you got?"

"A girl. Nude, white, young. Jumped, fell or was pushed off the fire escape."

"A junkie?"

"I don't know yet. Probably."

"How far'd she fall?"

"Haven't checked that out. We only just got here. But I'd guess it's up near the roof because she hit that pavement hard. She's a mess."

"The super know anything?"

"He says no. You want to talk to him?"

"If you don't mind." Sessions turned. "Gus Pardee's your name, huh, Pop? And you're the super, right? This where you live?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you're the one who reported the body, right?"

The man started and paled. "No, sir. I don't know nothing about it."

"Who did report it?"

"I don't know, sir. I don't know nothing."

"You're trying to tell me a girl falls out of the window in your building and you don't know anything about it? Come on, Pop. You can do better than that."

"No, sir. No, sir. I didn't know. Honest."

"You heard her fall, didn't you? What time was it?"

"No, she's—I don't hear nothing, man. It's—she's on the other side." He indicated the half of the building away from his apartment.

"How do you know?"

"This man showed me. Honest." He indicated Grinold, who nodded.

Sessions put a hand on the frightened man's arm. "All right, Pop, there's nothing to get nervous about. If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to worry about." He looked at Ernie. "You got something more to ask?"

"Not now. I'll show you the body."

Frank nodded. He gave the super a pat on the arm. "We'll talk to you later."

They went on, Sessions and Ecklin following Grinold up the steps into the paved area in back that was common to the rear steps of every building around the block. There were no structures out there, no fences. There was only the litter and stink of garbage—tons of it—strewn so that there was hardly a place where one could step without walking on it. The smell was sour and rancid and pungent and it hit them like a fist when they stepped up into it. Sessions said to Ecklin, "Smells like those cigars you smoke."

A young Negro patrolman with a hand lamp was close by and two other detectives, big men, were just coming away from the body. One was Adams, the other Carney, and both knew the homicide men. They passed greetings and Carney said, "Christ, what a stink. How can people live in a place like this?"

He had the patrolman bring the light over and they all went back to the dead girl. She was lying face down and, as Grinold said, she was a mess. The skull had been smashed so badly that part of the brain was obtruding and it was obvious that there were pelvic and a number of other fractures. Despite the severity of the head damage, however, there was little blood.

Sessions looked up at the fire escape landings and connecting stairs that laced the rear of the building. The body lay under the last windows on the lefthand side. He borrowed the light from the patrolman and flashed it up at each of the windows in turn. They were all open.

He played the light on the body and knelt closer, being careful that his shoes and trousers touched none of the garbage around her. Grannis came out to join them and also bent over for a look.

Sessions put a hand on the small of her back. "Cool," he said and stood up. "Some rigor."

"Can't tell her age yet," Grannis said. "Maybe when we turn her over. But she's going to be young all right. Maybe younger than we think."

"And a jumper," Sessions said. "What do you want to bet some spade put it to her?"

"Let's *hope* she's a jumper," Grinold breathed. "If this is a homicide, we've got troubles."

"And up in the middle of Harlem," Grannis said. "What the hell's a white girl doing up here?"

"A mainliner," Sessions guessed. "When we turn her over, I'm betting she'll be loaded with pop marks."

"Must be," Grinold said. "I can't see a girl coming in this section for any other reason. Hell, you can't get detectives to walk alone around here."

"And it was an anonymous report?" Sessions handed the lamp back to the patrolman.

"It was anonymous. Boy car caught it—report of a DOA in back at this address. They found her and checked with CB. No name for the caller."

Adams said, "Who'd be calling in a body in the back yard at this hour? You couldn't see her if you stumbled over her."

Ecklin said, "Probably somebody who heard her fall and knew she was there."

"Yeah, but with rigor mortis setting in, she's got to be dead more than two hours."

"Two hours is nothing. I had a jumper over in back of a building on Mount Morris Park in March a couple of years ago. Pretty young colored girl. So we got the call and went out there and she was frozen solid."

Sessions said, "What about the time the guy collapsed and died in the front hall—over in the two-eight? People stepped over him for four days before anybody called the police. And then it was only because the smell was getting bad."

"Anonymous phone call, no doubt," Ecklin said.

"It was anonymous."

Ecklin said, "Well, let's get the hell back inside and ring a few doorbells. This place stinks almost as bad as the decomposed room at the morgue."

Sessions laughed. He said, "Yeah, I wonder how many sanitation department trucks it would take to clean up this mess." He told the patrolman to stand by for photo and the M.E., to let no one but the M.E. touch the body, and to keep rats away.

As they started back, two men from the photo lab arrived, coming out the door and up the three steps. One carried a large camera and the other lugged a satchel loaded with equipment. "Pee-yew," the cameraman said. "What the hell is this place?"

Grannis recorded their names and shield numbers and indicated the body. The one with the camera said, "She looks kind of young. What was she, a junkie?"

"That's what we think."

"From tiptoe through the tulips to bare-assed in the garbage. You going to want her in color, Sarge?"

"Color," Grannis said and looked at Sessions.

Frank nodded. "And I'll want more when the M.E. turns her over. And I'm going to want the bloodstains on the pavement."

"You mean on the lettuce leaves and coffee grounds, don't you?"

"Jesus," Sessions said. "You're worse than Ray Ecklin. Yeah. Make it in blushing technicolor." He turned and pointed. "And get this half of the building. Top to bottom. That can be black and white."

"I gotcha." The man opened his camera and dug into the satchel his assistant set down. Sessions turned to Grinold. "Where'd Adams and Carney go?"

"They're starting a canvass."

"Anybody talk to those bystanders out front?"

"Harry Adams and I did. They say they don't know anything. They live in the neighborhood, they were on the street, they saw the cars."

Sessions stepped on the butt of his cigarette and blinked when the first flashbulb popped. The photographer released the spent

bulb, planted another in the socket and got down on one knee for a closeup of what showed of the head.

Ecklin and Grannis went off to push doorbells and Sessions and Grinold decided to do the same. They went back through the cellar but encountered Dr. Lyman at the head of the stairs. The doctor was a youngish but graying, crewcutted pathologist and Frank said to him, "You must be getting sick of my face tonight, Doc."

The examiner smiled. "Not really, but my wife does suggest I get into a more regular line of work. Like being a fireman."

Sessions and Grinold retraced their steps, giving Lyman a recap on the way. When they climbed the steps into the yard, the sky was lightening and day was ready to break.

The photographer flashed a last picture and said, "Just in time, Doc. That's what I call efficiency."

"You through?"

"Through till you turn her over."

Lyman borrowed the lamp from the patrolman and knelt beside the dead girl to assess the damage and observe how she lay. The detectives stood over him, the patrolman a discreet step farther back. "She hasn't been moved?" Lyman asked.

"Not by us," Sessions said. "And it doesn't look like by anybody else either."

Lyman agreed, for the points of contact with the pavement matched the points of impact on the body. He felt her here and there, finding her arms and legs, neck and jaw now stiff with rigor mortis. Then he tipped her over so that the broken ruin of her head was grotesquely upturned. There were grit marks and blood on the smashed part but the rest of the skin was freckled and pale. Blood matted the hair where her skull was broken and there were stains on the concrete and garbage where she had lain, but there had been little bleeding.

It was hard to tell what she had looked like in life but the hair that had escaped matting was crisp and clear and a rich, lovely auburn, vibrant with the sheen of youth.

Sessions' first glance took in the unlipsticked mouth, the imma-

ture but well formed breasts, the firm well-toned flesh. "She's not just a young girl," he said in some surprise. "She's a kid." He bent and examined her forearms and frowned. The expected injection scars of the hypodermic users were missing. If the girl were an addict, either she hadn't reached the stage of mainlining her heroin or she was hooked on a different drug.

Lyman, noting the smooth skin, said, "She doesn't look like a junkie."

Sessions shook his head and stood up. "In which case, I don't get what the hell she's doing here. She looks like she ought to be home singing in the church choir—the children's choir."

Grinold said, "It wouldn't surprise me if that's where her folks think she is. Or somewhere like that."

Lyman pursed his lips. "You don't have any idea who she is or where she's from?"

Grinold said they had no ID on her. "She doesn't look like the tramp type, though. No lipstick and no makeup."

"Maybe she's a teeny-bopper come in to town looking for excitement."

"Probably high on acid and an easy mark."

"I expect there'll be a Missing Persons on her tomorrow."

Sessions lighted a cigarette and said, "Yeah. Some fouled-up family blew the deal."

Lyman looked at her crotch, tried to pull her legs wider, but couldn't. "There's blood," he said. "It looks like she was a virgin and got raped."

Sessions leaned forward for a view. "That's quite a lot of blood, Doc."

"I don't know that it's excessive, but she must have been in pain."

"Yeah. I guess she was."

Grinold said, "What do you figure she did, Doc? Jump?"

Lyman rose to his feet. "That's the question. And I don't know that the autopsy will tell us."

"There isn't much blood around," Sessions told him. "I hope you notice that."

"I notice. But we'll have to wait and see what we find when we open her up."

Frank exhaled a nervous lungful of smoke. "Speaking of autopsies, Doc, how soon can you get at this one?"

Lyman mused for a moment. "Of course we could do it now—take her right down to the morgue. There's not much point in my going back home tonight anyway—"

"The sooner the better, Doc. Then we'll know what we're up against."

"Except that, in a case like this, where we don't even know where she jumped or fell from, I don't want to do anything until Al Sokolsky has a chance at her. This is made for Al."

"So when will he—"

"It's Sunday so he shouldn't be tied up. We ought to be able to get him early."

Grinold said, "Who's Al whatever-his-name-is?"

Lyman said Sokolsky was the criminalist who did the microscopic examinations of clothing, bodies and everything else, plus countless other kinds of examinations and tests. "That reminds me," he said. "I'm going to want her hands and feet bagged. I'll tell the morgue wagon when I call them, but you"—he turned to the young Negro patrolman—"make sure they do it. It's very important."

CHAPTER III

Lyman called for the morgue wagon from the super's apartment along with Grinold and Sessions. The super lived alone in a shabby two room suite whose barred windows were sunk in below-ground shafts. No matter what he might have heard outside, there was nothing he could have seen.

When Lyman was through, Grinold phoned his boss, Lt. Yucker, and gave him a briefing. A canvass would be necessary, he explained, for there were as many as forty buildings around the block whose rear windows looked out on the yard. That, of course, automatically meant every inhabitant of every apartment boasting such a view would have to be interviewed.

With quick action, most of the people could be hit right away. A number, however, would be missed the first time around and callbacks would have to be made. For the rough, general work, anybody could be used and Yucker would amass as many men as he could as fast as he could to get the job under way. For the long haul, and for those cases where the interviewer suspected he wasn't getting full cooperation or truthful answers, interrogation specialists would take over.

Lyman filled out his inquisition sheet and left, promising Sessions he'd do the autopsy as soon as Sokolsky had had his look at the body. Sessions nodded and started pumping the super about the neighborhood. Did he see many white women in the area?

No, said the super. He almost never saw no white women. If

he did, they had white men with them. No, he'd never seen a strange white girl by herself.

"Anything like this happen around here before?"

"Oh, no, suh."

"I don't mean somebody dying. I mean trouble. Any trouble in this building or any building around here?"

"No, suh."

"How about somebody screaming? You ever hear anybody screaming?"

"No, suh."

"Anybody got a bad reputation around here regarding women? Anybody in this neighborhood you ever hear any gossip about?"

"No, suh."

Sessions' voice got sharp. "Stop giving me that Uncle Tom 'no, suh,' crap. What're you afraid of? You think if you tell me something I'm going to blab it around the block?"

The old man licked nervous lips. "No, suh. I mean, I'm not trying to kid you. I don't want to kid with the cops. I don't want no trouble."

"Then give me straight answers. And don't feed me all that slop about never hearing anybody scream. Jesus, where the hell do you think I'm from? Can you tell me you ever go through a night where you *don't* hear somebody scream?"

"Well, I mean I thought you meant did I hear *that* girl scream—some strange white girl."

"Like hell you did. Now who's got a bad reputation in this neighborhood with women? And don't tell me you don't know."

"Well, I don't get around—"

"You're a junkie, aren't you?"

The man swallowed and nodded.

Sessions snorted. "You goddam clown. You don't get out in the street? Who the hell are you trying to kid?"

"Nobody, suh. Well, I guess maybe I heard talk about Willie McConnell. But with black women. Not with white women. I don't know nothing about nobody being involved with white women."

Sessions wrote the name in his notebook. "What's McConnell's address?"

The super said he didn't know, he lived on this block, but he hadn't seen the man in the last couple of years.

"Now who plays with *white* women?"

"Nobody, suh, that I know of."

"This is your building. A naked white woman went out of one of the top windows in this building tonight."

The super conceded that was so but he steadfastly insisted he knew nothing about that girl or any other girl. He said it with all the sincerity he could muster.

When Sessions and Grinold left the super they were tight-lipped and grim. In the corridor the photo men were coming back. Now only the Negro patrolman was out with the body, waiting for the morgue wagon to make its rounds, watching to see if anyone tried to leave via the fire escape while the tenants were being questioned.

"Stick around," Sessions told the photographers as they climbed the stairs to the first floor.

"You got something more for us?"

"If we can find where she fell from, you can bet on it."

Detectives Carney and Adams were there. They had their shields pinned to their shirts and were questioning nervous, wide-awake, bleary-eyed tenants. Grannis and Ecklin, they said, had gone to the roof.

Sessions and Grinold climbed after them, leaving the photo men below. The last flight, from the fifth floor up, was a narrow steel staircase that led to an access door. The roof itself was tarred and graveled and level with the other roofs around. All were separated by four-foot brick and tile walls that rimmed all sides.

Ecklin and Grannis were at the rear wall where it overlooked the latticework of fire escapes. They turned as the newcomers approached and Ecklin said, "You got a clue?"

Sessions shook his head and said he'd talked to the super. "I

don't think he knows anything that's going to help us. At least not yet."

"What's that mean?"

"It's his building and there ought to be talk."

Grinold looked over the edge and said, "You can smell the stink all the way up here. I don't know how people can stand it."

Sessions said, "It's a special talent."

Grannis said he didn't think the girl went off the roof. The fire escape was too much in the way. Ecklin agreed the roof was unlikely. "But what about the super, Frank? You think he can help?"

Sessions shrugged. "He's a junkie and a liar by nature. The only reason I can believe him when he says there haven't been other white women dead or raped around here is because the two-five squad hasn't received such reports."

Ecklin smiled and chewed his cigar. "Who's going to trust a junkie?"

It was a statement that summed it up. A man who needs a periodic heroin injection just to keep going, let alone get a kick, isn't concerned with morality or truthfulness, let alone honor and integrity. He'll do what has to be done to get that next shot, whatever the deed has to be.

Ecklin stayed on the roof to look around some more and Grannis, Sessions and Grinold came down to pin their own shields on their shirts and start making inquiries.

The procedure was to pound on doors and ring bells, making plenty of noise. When there was a response and a querying voice behind the panels said, "Who is it?" the detectives said, "Open up. Police." It didn't matter that the people had been sleeping, or hadn't been sleeping, whether they liked it or didn't like it. Murder or possible murder had been committed and what was important was tracking down the killer. Who had seen and heard what? That was what the police were interested in—not whether it was a convenient time to ask such questions.

Doors opened to the limit of their safety chains, black-skinned faces stared out at the gold shields, pinned for display—to reassure the viewer that these were really police detectives and not

robbers and muggers masquerading as cops. Then the chains were detached and people in nightgowns and robes, the sleep gone from their eyes, stepped into doorways to tell what they knew.

"We got a report a girl fell off the fire escape in back. What do you know about it?" . . . "What's your name?" . . . "Anyone in here sleep out on the fire escape?" . . . "What are the names of the other people living in this apartment?" . . . "What did you hear last night? What did you see?" . . . "What about a white girl?" . . . "You're sure you didn't hear anything? You didn't hear anybody scream?" . . . "Oh, you did hear a scream? A lot of screams?" . . . "When was this? About what time?" . . . "How long did the screams last?" . . . "Where were the screams coming from?" . . . "You couldn't tell? Well, what would you guess—did it sound like they were coming from this building?" . . . "They did? Did it sound like it was on this floor or downstairs?" . . . "You're not sure? All right, how did they sound? Far away?" . . . "Was it a woman?" . . . "Could you hear any words—did she say anything?" . . . "All right, no words. Who else heard the screams?" . . . "You don't know? Then you didn't talk to anyone else about the screams?" . . . "Of course I mean in your own place." . . . "Oh? Everybody else in your place heard them too? Did you hear them too, lady?" . . . "I see, and what's your name?"

Lieutenant Yucker came up the stairs and paused to listen to what a man and woman were telling Grinold in their doorway. Grinold explained it to him. "They heard a lot of screaming, Lieu. About eleven o'clock. It lasted five minutes."

Yucker nodded. "They heard it downstairs too. They heard it all through the house."

Sessions, interviewing a grandmother, mother and daughter, saw a man stick his head out another door and beckoned him over. "May I have your name, sir?" . . . "Did you hear the screaming that these ladies heard?" . . . "Did you see a white girl in the building coming up the stairs?" . . . "Do you know if anybody tried to find out where the screaming was coming from?" . . . "Did you see a white girl in the building any time to-

night?" . . . "After the screaming stopped, did you hear anything else?"

Yucker only stayed long enough to appraise the situation and announce he was rounding up men for a canvass. Then he left. The others moved down to the fourth floor and knocked on more doors. Nobody answered the one by the stairs, the door to a room looking directly down on the dead girl, but a couple of tenants in other apartments had stories to tell. There was a lot of screaming coming out of that particular room about eleven o'clock. And some crashing sounds like furniture being banged against the walls. They supposed it was some couple having an argument and they had kept out of it. One woman, who had a phone, said she almost called the police. "It was awful," she said. "It sounded like something terrible was going on and it wouldn't stop. You couldn't think. But then it did stop."

Sessions was hitting the next door tenant with questions. "These screams. What did they sound like?"

He was a little man, old, wizened and careful. "I don't know, suh. Like screams."

"Like a colored girl screaming? Or a white girl?"

The man nuzzled his nose with a finger. "Wal, suh, I don't recollect exactly."

"You know the difference, don't you? You can tell the difference?"

"I don't know about that, suh. I don't recall ever hearing a white girl scream before."

"But you've heard colored women scream. You've heard that lots of times, haven't you?"

The man nodded. "But it didn't sound like that. I ain't never heard nobody scream like that. Nossir. It would chill your blood."

"What about the fire escape? What'd you see out on the fire escape?"

"Man, I didn't see nothing out on that fire escape."

"What'd you hear?"

"Nothing. I mean it, mister. I didn't hear nothing."

"It's a hot night. You've got your windows open—"

"No, suh. I got my windows shut. And I got the shades down. I don't want to see nothing. I don't know nothing. I didn't see no white girl. I didn't see no black girl. I didn't see no man."

Sessions jerked a thumb. "Who lives in that room?"

"I don't know, mister."

"Does anybody live in that room?"

"I don't know."

"You live next door. Now don't give me a line of crap. People either go in and out of that room or they don't. Now which is it?"

"People come. People go. But I don't know who lives there. I swear to God I don't."

"What kind of people come and go?"

"Young. Shady. I mind my own business, mister. I keep my door locked."

Grannis and Grinold came over as Sessions stepped to the unanswered door. He didn't touch the knob but turned the shaft behind it until he felt the latch come free. The door was unlocked and when he pushed, it swung open. He kicked it wide, and the stench that hit him was worse than the garbage outside. He felt for the light switch without exposing himself unduly, and found there was no electricity.

He looked in carefully and growing daylight through the window revealed an almost empty room, the only noticeable piece of equipment being a large and dirty old doublebed mattress on the floor.

Sessions tucked his hands in his hip pockets and braved the smell, advancing into the room until he could see what he was looking for—the myriad of matches on the floor, the left-over cotton wads, the charred glassine packets, the soot-smeared whiskey-bottle caps.

Grinold looked in and Grannis behind him.

"It's a goddam shooting gallery," Sessions said.

"It figures," Grannis replied.

Sessions approached the mattress. "I wonder if Yucker knew about it."

Grinold said, "By Christ, you know, I think this is the shooting gallery our guys raided three days ago."

"You get much of a haul?"

"About a dozen junkies altogether. If this is the place."

Grannis said, "The question is, is this the place where the girl was?"

Sessions lighted his lighter and crouched by the mattress. It was old and rotted and covered with stains but one small stain was new and it looked like blood.

The detective stood up and put the lighter away. "We'd better get photo up here," he said, stepping back out into the hall with the others, making sure he didn't touch anything. "If this isn't the place, I belong back in uniform."

CHAPTER IV

Grinold said he'd go down and fetch the photo men.

Sessions said, "And do me a favor, will you, pal? Send up that son of a bitch of a superintendent. And get on the phone down there and call latent prints and the police lab—"

"Latent prints? Can't photo print the place?"

"They can but I don't want them to. One print may make or break the case and I want only top men doing the dusting."

"Yeah, you're right, Frank. But, ah, it takes a district commander's O.K., or the chief's. Should I call Captain—"

"You don't have to call anybody. Just tell Latent Prints that Chief Moran is authorizing it. He'll back you up."

Grinold said, "Yeah, O.K."

"And the police lab. We're going to want a job done on that room—the window ledge, the fire escape, the mattress. And get another uniformed patrolman out here. I want a guard on this room."

Grinold took out his notebook and scribbled it all down. "Anything else?"

"Yeah. Call Emergency Service to come make a search."

"A search?"

"I don't see the girl's clothes around. They must be someplace."

Grinold laughed. "Hell, of course." He took off, his shoes clattering down the stairs.

Sessions, watching him go, finished his cigarette and ground it under his foot. "Oh, Jesus," he said to Grannis. "What the hell is

the police department coming to, Ken? All the old guys are going—they're getting out. There's nothing but kids playing detective these days. You go to a squad, you don't see a familiar face any more."

"Well, don't forget, Frank, we've been around for a while. There's been a lot of turnover. We're the old pros now. No wonder the young guys look green. We must have looked pretty green ourselves when we first made it into the bureau."

"But we had hustle, damn it, Ken. We had pride. And we knew the street. When I was in the sixteenth, I knew every damned prostitute in Times Square. I knew every hustler and grifter and stagedoor johnny— This guy, Ernie, he's a nice guy. But he's no help. Here's a shooting gallery. I don't think he'd have known it was one if I didn't tell him. He should be telling me. He should know this district cold. It's his case. I'm only supposed to be helping him with it. He should be telling me what he needs. Instead, he's asking me. A good squad man who knows the street can save you hours of time. The moment we arrived on the scene and found where the girl was lying, he should have been telling us there was a shooting gallery on the fourth floor right over her head. We're a specialty squad. We can't get out and around with people. We have to depend on the squad detectives to do that."

"Yeah," Grannis said, "but in our day, we had time. Nowadays a squad man is tied up with paperwork. When you figure all the forms he's got to fill out, and you take into consideration that most detectives aren't expert typists, it's no wonder they don't have time to circulate."

"That's another thing. You take the FBI. Jesus. They got a report to write up, they call a steno pool. That's what we ought to have. That's where we could save some money. You figure a detective makes ten to fifteen grand a year and you saddle him with paperwork, and you've got the highest priced damned secretaries in the world. And the lousiest."

The photo lab men came up the stairs lugging their equipment and the one in charge said, "Don't tell me we can quit here. I thought we'd have to climb to the roof for sure."

Sessions told them to relax, it would all be downhill from then on. He showed them the room and told them what he wanted. "And don't touch a God damned thing in there. We're going to print the place and get the lab out."

"Touch anything? I wouldn't so much as brush against a wall in this damned toilet without I should burn my clothes."

The super dragged his old bones up to the fourth floor level and around the staircase to where the detectives were. "Yassuh," he said.

Sessions fixed him with a bleak and ice-hard eye. "All right, Pop. Why didn't you tell us you had a shooting gallery here?"

"I don't know what you're talking about—shooting gallery?"

"Don't pull that innocent crap. The junk dealers come around at certain set times, right? Twice a day, three times a day? Seven to eight, ten to twelve—like that, right? And the junkies make their buy. And then they need a place to go where they can shoot themselves and where an expert can shoot the novices and where they can lie around till they come out of the nod. And you get a taste, don't you, Pop? Everybody gives you just a little shot of dope for the use of the room. We know the story. We've been through it a million times."

"Listen, I swear I don't know nothing about no white women. I swear to God. They never had no women up here."

"How long's this room been used?"

"A week maybe. Seven to eight days."

"And it got raided, right? When?"

"I don't know. A couple—three days ago."

"And who's been using it since?"

"I don't know. Nobody."

"Don't give me that 'nobody' bit. The guy in the next apartment saw them. And you're not letting anybody up here without getting your taste."

"Well, I don't know the people, exactly. I don't know what they're doing."

"What time was this room last used?"

"You mean today?"

"I mean tonight."

"Well I guess there was a couple of guys in around eight."

Sessions got his notebook out. "Give me their names."

"I don't know their names."

"Pop, you're making yourself a bundle of grief. There's a dead girl out in back of this building. She's dead. You understand that? And when people die, Pop, that means trouble. Now you're going to tell me who was using that room there tonight. Because we're going to take fingerprints in that room and we're going to find out. And if you don't tell us, or if you tell us wrong, then you're going to be in real-bad trouble. Because you're not protecting a couple of junkies now, Pop. You're protecting somebody who was involved with a person's death. Now do you get me?"

"I know 'em," the old man said. "I don't know their names, but I know 'em."

"You find out their names." Sessions aimed a finger at him. "You understand me? And you find out about the white girl."

Pop rubbed his nose and said he sure would, and got out of there. He was pale and his hands shook.

Sessions lighted another cigarette and said to Grannis, "I'm going to keep hitting that bastard. What he doesn't know, he can find out." He turned and looked up as Ray Ecklin appeared at the top of the stairs, carrying a bundle and smoking his inevitable cigar.

"What the hell have you got?"

Ecklin grinned and started down. "The girl's clothes. At least I assume she's the only one who's missing any."

"Where were they?"

"Crammed in a corner beside the stairs down from the next roof."

"You get to take three giant steps."

Ecklin joined them and dumped the clothes on the steps. Sessions picked up the ripped and tattered articles one after the other, looking at them rapidly. Ray said, "Tore them right off her back."

There was a bra, a half slip, pair of pants, a dress, and a pair of low, slipper-type shoes. The bra had a broken strap and the eye hooks torn out. The slip had been rent, the pants were split and torn. The dress was ripped as if it had been removed like husking corn. It was a sturdy dress too and what had been done to it required enormous strength.

"Clothes aren't particularly clean, but they aren't dirty," Grannis noted.

"Like she's been wearing them three or four days running," Ecklin said. "But not a week."

Sessions said, "You didn't, by chance, overlook a purse in that pile, did you?"

"No purse. And I went all the way down the stairs looking for it."

"The perpetrator took it with him, I guess. Son of a bitch. No name and no address. That's going to make it tougher."

Grannis said, "No laundry marks on any of the clothes. No label in the dress, either. I think it's homemade."

Frank picked up the dress and studied the seams. "Homemade," he agreed. He held the torn pieces together to get an idea of its shape. "High neck. Plain. Utilitarian rather than fancy. This is what some mother would make for her daughter over in Moscow, not New York."

Grannis said, "The slippers have a Beth-Ann label in them. That's not going to be any help. There must be a hundred Beth-Ann outlets in New York alone."

"And a thousand more around the country. We can forget about the shoes." Frank gave the dress one more critical look. "I'm telling you, Sarge-Ray, it's too damned unsophisticated." He dropped it in with the other items. "She and the clothes. I don't make her living around here. I've got a feeling about that. You know, she's the kind of DOA I'd expect to find down in Homicide South—some runaway, some would-be hippie who got herself gang-raped and who fell, jumped, got pushed or thrown out the window afterwards."

"It could be like that even up here," Ecklin said. "Some run-

away kid who falls in with some phony hippies who promise her acid? How's she going to know where they're taking her?"

"Like the hippie girl in the two-oh, you mean—where the spade killed her boy-friend? That's right, it happens."

"Sure it does. Just because they start downtown doesn't mean they have to stay downtown."

"Well, let's hope the hell we can find a witness to tell us about it."

Ecklin said, "After the girl goes out the window, the guy apparently takes her clothing with him to hide the site of the rape."

Grannis said, "And probably went down the stairs in the next building after he hid them."

Sessions said, "That's a building we'd better do a thorough canvass on." He went to the doorway to look in on the photo men at work. He mashed out his cigarette and said to the sergeant, "I ought to cancel Emergency Service as a tribute to what a hot-shot Ray Ecklin is at finding things. But I think I'll let it stand. After all, he did goof up on part of it. He didn't find her purse."

CHAPTER V

Photo was finished and packing up when Grinold returned. Adams and Carney, he said, had completed their canvass of that building and had gone to the next. They found more than half of the rooms were empty.

Two men from Emergency Service arrived on the scene and Grannis told them the story. They were to hunt the hallways and stairwells, trashcans, areaways and the garbage-littered yard in an effort to find the girl's purse.

The patrolman guard for the premises arrived right after that and was given his briefing. No one was to enter or leave the room or touch the door before the latent print men did their job. After that, only the men from the police lab were to be allowed to enter. When they finished, he was to tell the super to keep the room barred and see that the super nailed it shut. Then he was to return to headquarters.

That finished their work and the four detectives tramped down the stairs. The sun was well up and people were on the streets when they got outside. The morgue wagon still hadn't come and only car 254 and one from the twenty-fifth squad were double-parked in front.

They climbed in the homicide car with Ecklin driving and Grannis in front. They were silent for a bit, looking out the windows by instinct at the street, Ecklin chewing his cigar, Sessions inhaling deep drags from his cigarette. "Junkie or runaway," Frank said. "What ails these kids? She ends her life lying naked

in filth, and I'll lay odds she hadn't seen her sixteenth birthday."

Grinold said, "From the blood she must not only have been a virgin, she must have got torn bad on the inside."

Sessions nodded. "Her last hour must have been a real gasser."

"I've got a daughter," Ray said. "Sixteen. And she's pretty, too. And you look at that little girl and you think, Christ, there but for the grace of God—. You think, where does she go when you're not with her? What guys does she see? You know, you meet them, but they put on their best face in front of the old man. What the hell are they like underneath? You wonder. And a young girl is so damned vulnerable. They think they know so damned much, and they know from nothing. My kid thinks I'm too strict. But, Christ, when I see something like that, I don't think I'm strict enough."

Grannis said, "I've got one twenty. She's over the age of consent, but I'm still sweating. I've got her in college, but the way colleges are these days, she's probably safer on the streets."

Grinold said to Sessions, "You got children, Frank?"

Frank laughed shortly. "If I have, their mothers haven't told me."

"Frank is spared worrying about daughters," Ecklin informed him.

Sessions said, "It's a good thing, too. I couldn't take it. I know too much about what can happen to them."

Ecklin found a parking slot in front of the station house and the detectives went in past the desk and mounted the stairs to the second floor headquarters of the Twenty-fifth Detective Squad. Some fifteen men were there, nearly all from other squads ranging from the nineteenth to the thirty-fourth. They were the extras, the men who could be spared to help with the canvass.

Lieutenant Yucker was standing with a foot on a chair, sipping coffee and talking to Captain Moroney, the Sixth District Commander. "First tour after vacation," he was saying, "and we're up all night. We got a breaking and entering at three o'clock and an aggravated assault at half past four. Fifty stitches worth of

aggravated assault this guy cut into his wife. Then we get this one." He looked up as Grinold and the homicide men came in. "Anything new?"

"She got raped in a shooting gallery," Grinold told him after greeting the captain.

"A shooting gallery? Did we know about it?"

"Yeah. We raided it a couple of days ago. You were on vacation."

"That God damned place should have had a lid put on it. That should have been closed down tight."

Moroney said, "They'll just open up another one somewhere else. What's that you've got?"

He was pointing at the clothes and Ecklin put them and the slippers on a desk. "Those were in the stairwell down from the roof next door."

Moroney and Yucker sorted through them. "They really got torn," Yucker said. "Looks like a strong man."

"Strong and hungry," Sessions answered, lighting a cigarette. "I got a feeling he's no junkie."

Ecklin said, "Junkies only work that hard to get a fix."

"Got any information on the girl?" the captain asked.

"Only what's there. Homemade dress, inexpensive underthings, cheap, scuffed and dirty slippers. It looks like New York grime. Maybe the lab can make something out of it."

"How did she die? Homicide or suicide?"

"We don't know yet. We think she got hurt bad. It looks like the perpetrator went after her the way he went after her clothes. So whether she jumped or fell or got thrown is anybody's guess."

Grinold said, "If she jumped after what he did to her, and to stop him from doing more, I don't care how you cut it, that's murder."

Yucker said, "Morally, maybe, but legally is something else again."

"In the Church, if a girl commits suicide rather than submit to that kind of torture, she goes to heaven anyway because suicide wasn't her intent. It was her escape."

"Yeah, but God doesn't sit on our juries and how our courts and our juries choose to interpret responsibility is apt to be quite different. All I can say is, if the fall killed her, you'd better work like hell digging up witnesses who can say she was pushed or you'd better forget the homicide angle. All you'll have on the perpetrator is first degree rape."

Moroney said, "A lot of monsters in the world. Well, all I can say is, we'd better look sharp. The girl being young and white and found up in Harlem, we can expect the press to give it a big play."

"Yes, sir."

The captain left and Yucker told the homicide detectives to help themselves to coffee. He was waiting for three more men and he'd get the canvass started.

Sessions poured and passed cups around. "You got anything in the fifty-two file on sex-offenders, Lieu?"

"I'll take a look."

Two more detectives came in and one, named Al Barton, said, "Hey! Frank Sessions!"

Sessions turned and said, "Oh, for Christ's sake. What the hell hole did you crawl out of?"

They shook hands and Frank said, "I thought you were still down in the ninth."

"I got transferred to the three-four six months ago. It's like a different world."

"How are the hippies down in the East Village?"

Barton spread his hands. "You know. This way and that way."

"Maybe you're the guy I should talk to. This case is a weirdo. White girl off a fire escape out of a junkie shooting gallery. It's a rape job, not an overdose. This is a kid. No puncture scars." He gestured. "Those are her clothes there. Take a look at them. See if you read them the way I do. I don't make her from New York."

Barton, lifting up the dress, shook his head. "Doesn't look like anything I've seen around this town."

"So maybe she's a runaway. What do you think? Those aren't hippie clothes, of course, but—"

"She could be a runaway. The clothes don't matter. A lot of kids adopt the costume after they get here."

"I'll listen to you. You know the Village inside out."

Barton shook his head. "I wouldn't say that. Not any more. It keeps changing. Like—well, back in sixty-two—thereabouts—that's when the beatniks were all over the place and the coffee houses sprang up. Remember the coffee houses? You opened a coffee house because you didn't need a liquor license. But you don't hear about them any more. They're gone. Why? The rents. They keep going up down there. I'm telling you, Frank, there're still a few serious artists who live in the Village but all the Bohemians—all the phonies and would-be's, they can't stand the prices any longer. They moved out. And the coffee houses. Most of them folded. A couple moved over to the East Village but it wasn't the same. I don't know that there's a coffee house left.

"Then the hippies came in. The beatniks, they at least were creative. They were trying to do something—paint, sculpt, write poetry. But the hippies, they're a different breed. They don't do anything. They're drop-outs. They won't create, they won't work, they won't partake. You know, I got in with some of them—got to know them—back a year ago last summer. I was on a case down there it took three months to crack. Theft of furs from a loft. Anyway, this young kid I knew, he said to me, 'You know, we live off you.' And the kid was absolutely right. So I said to him, 'You're right, Gene.' His name was Gene. And I said, 'So what would happen if all of us lived like you? Who'd *we* live off of?' And he says, 'Ah, but that's the point. You won't.' And he's right, there too."

"How much harm do they do, Al?"

"I don't know, Frank. It depends. When they first started moving into the East Village area, around Tompkins Square Park—trust them to pick the good locations—the residents were pretty bitter. They're mostly Ukrainians around there, polacks, East Europeans, quiet and hard-working. And you get these kooks coming in, lying around in the park, singing and playing musical instruments half the night, it made for a lot of friction. But it's

pretty well settled down now—or it was when I left. An uneasy truce, you might say. Each leaves the other strictly alone.”

“Tompkins Square Park is the place then?”

“That’s the headquarters. But you get a lot of them over in Washington Square. Except I understand from a guy in the Sixth, that the residents there complained about the noise and that’s a high rent district so when they complain, they get action. Washington Square is closed now from one A.M. till nine A.M. and the TPF comes around to make sure.”

Grinold came close to listen and Sessions introduced them. “Al Barton, Ernie Grinold. Ernie’s the guy from the two-five catching this one and I’m working on it with him. Al and I were together in the tenth precinct back when we were in uniform.” He laughed. “Jesus, what a hell-hole that was. The wharves, all the crews off the ships, the derelicts, the whores.”

“You really learned how to take care of yourself down there. If you didn’t, you were dead.”

Sessions said, “That’s why I’ll never take exams for sergeant. I couldn’t stand going back into that uniform.”

“You wouldn’t be in uniform long, Frank. They’d want you back in the bureau.”

“One day is too long. I’m spoiled.”

Yucker came over and showed Sessions a file card. “That’s the first sex-offender. I don’t know how many others we’ll find. I’ll have the men comb the file.”

The picture and vital statistics and arrest record of a male Negro were on the card and Sessions copied the name and address into his notebook. Allen Anderson was the man’s name. His height and weight didn’t make him appear powerful enough to have torn the dead girl’s garments the way they’d been torn but Frank Sessions would want to know what he’d been doing this past evening nevertheless.

CHAPTER VI

At five minutes of nine that morning, Detective Frank Sessions and Detective Ernest Grinold went up the polished stone steps and through the glass doors into the lobby of the "City of New York—Office of the Chief Medical Examiner." They nodded to the uniformed receptionist at the desk and walked briskly into the hall beyond, pulled open a heavy fire door and descended a flight of stairs. Another door let them into the broad, tiled aisles that went around the mammoth collection of refrigerator compartments in which were kept the bodies of all persons whose cause of death had not been attested to by a physician.

The compartments were in three tiers from floor to chest level and one on the right was open, its drawer out, while a Negro attendant pulled a yellow-hued corpse off onto a metal wagon. Frank gestured a greeting at the man and led Grinold the other way around a corner to the autopsy room.

Though it was early and it was Sunday and only half a force was on hand, the big room was still a busy place. Doctors Grossman and Ballou were already halfway through their first autopsy of the day and four people were gathered around the dead girl who was Frank's and Ernie's responsibility. One was the patrolman who had stood guard over her, one was a Negro attendant starting to hose the dirt and blood off of her, and two were men from photo come to print her and take her picture.

She lay on her back on the latticed top of the metal table, her smashed face stained with blood, the neighboring hair soaked in

it. There were purple lividity marks to indicate how she had lain but they were faint. The rest of her skin was drained and white except for faint suntan marks denoting the edges of a very prim bathing suit.

One photo man was preparing his camera, at the same time instructing his assistant in the art of fingerprinting bodies, advising against too much ink, advising against the way the man was trying to press the paper. He took the folded sheet himself to do a demonstration finger. "Hold the hand this way. If you bend it like this and put pressure here, the fingers spread. Now grasp the finger, press the paper on this side, away from you, and roll it toward you. You're trying to roll it away from you. That makes it hard on yourself."

The novice assistant tried again with better success. The girl, Sessions noted, had long, delicate fingers and a slender, beautifully shaped hand.

The photographer took a shot of the girl's face as it lay, turned toward the camera. He went around the other side and told the assistant to watch a trick to getting a profile shot without having to touch the head. He adjusted the lens settings, held the camera over his head, took aim and flashed another picture. He said, "And you come out with a profile shot, you hope."

Sessions, watching the fingerprint man, said, "Rigor mortis is almost gone?"

"Like hell it is. I had to break it."

"Sokolsky examine the body?"

The photographer laughed. "Examine it? He climbed all over it. He must have been forty-five minutes going over every inch of her with a magnifying lens. I don't know what there was to find, but he found things."

"Especially in the pubic region," the assistant said. "Man, did he examine her pubic region!"

"And plucking hairs. Here, there, all over. He was telling us you've got different kinds of hairs in different parts of the body. Even in the same areas. Even in the pubic region you got different kinds of hairs."

Sessions, drawing hard on his cigarette, said, "Oh, Jesus."

Dr. Lyman, wearing a white tunic and pants, came into the room and over to the table. "You about finished?"

The fingerprint man was on the second card and said he had one more to do. The patrolman told Lyman he was supposed to make an identification. Lyman said fine and had him sign the paper.

"When you got rigor mortis," the photo man was telling his assistant, "did you notice how breaking the stiffness in the shoulder muscles softens the rest of the arm and makes it easier to print?"

A phone on one of the window ledges rang and Lyman went to answer it. The patrolman who had made the identification—that this was the body he had guarded—departed, and Sessions, noting Grinold's greenish face, said, "You watched autopsies much, Ernie?"

"I've seen a couple. Old people, they were. Nothing like what you've seen."

"The old people are the easiest. Mangled bodies. Decomposed bodies. You get conditioned to those. The little children are harder to take."

Grinold said, "Yeah. I can't get away from the feeling with this girl that she's still going to feel the knife."

The photographer said, "I get a feeling—you know, with someone like her—a young kid stretched out naked like this—I get the feeling she's embarrassed. Like I ought to pull a sheet over her."

His assistant said, "Especially with Sokolsky going over her crotch with a magnifying glass looking for stray hairs."

"Well, you know how kids are at her age. Being naked is the worst thing that can happen to you."

Sessions said, "Being naked is the least thing that happened to her." He turned and went down to the phone when Lyman beckoned.

"It's the *Times* reporter," Lyman said. "I couldn't tell him much. Maybe you'd better talk to him."

Frank stepped on his cigarette and took the phone, identifying himself. He listened to the reporter's recap of his own knowledge and the request for the full story. He said, "What you've got is accurate. That's where she was found and she was white. The room she was apparently in was unoccupied . . . No, there's no tenant listed for the room. Half the rooms in the building are empty, as a matter of fact . . . No, we don't know how she got there, why she went, who she was with, or anything . . . No, we don't have any idea who she is or where she came from . . . She's in her teens, between thirteen and nineteen and probably closer to thirteen. She's five three or four, weight about a hundred and five, white skin, freckles, auburn hair, . . . No, we haven't examined her yet for scars or other identifying marks . . . You can say that Detective Ernest Grinold of the Twenty-fifth Detective Squad is in charge of the case . . . Me? I'm assisting him . . . That's right. Sessions. Frank Sessions. Detective Second Grade . . . I'm with the homicide squad, Manhattan North. I'm working with him on it . . . No, I can't say any more on the matter. All further statements regarding the investigation will have to come from either Lieutenant Yucker of the Twenty-fifth Detectives, or Lieutenant Farquhar of Homicide."

He returned from the phone and the photo men were putting away their equipment. Grinold was looking more conditioned to the autopsy room so Frank introduced him to Grossman and Ballou and they watched them work. Grossman's body was that of a twenty-four year old Puerto Rican girl who had died of an overdose of heroin—at least that was the expected verdict. Ballou's body was of a young male suicide in Greenwich Village and there was a bullet-hole in his forehead. To Ballou, the thing that made this suicide memorable was that he'd been found lying under a sign which read, "You can't get out of this world alive."

Dr. Degnan, gray-haired and older, came in and looked at the new girl as one of the attendants prepared her skull. "This the one up in Harlem?" he asked Sessions. "She's got the wrong color skin."

"That's what the mystery is all about." He introduced Grinold

and Degnan shook hands. He looked at the girl again. "She's just a kid. What'd she hit?"

"A pavement after a four floor drop."

"How'd it happen?"

"That's what we're hoping somebody can tell us."

"I'd tell you she didn't jump, but that's only my logical opinion which—" he raised his voice a little, "the other doctors in this room will tell you isn't worth a tinker's damn."

Grossman chuckled and Ballou said, "Why, John, everybody loves you."

Degnan turned the girl's arm over and saw no puncture marks. He looked at the blood around her vagina. He said to Frank, "You're not calling her a junkie are you?"

"I think she's more likely a runaway—maybe fell in with the hippies."

"That's something to fall into."

Grinold said, "Maybe she experienced some of that love they talk about."

"Love?" Degnan laughed. "You hear about the case we had a couple of years ago? A couple of hippies down in the Village?"

"You don't mean the kid from Connecticut—what's-her-name—the girl and guy killed in the cellar?"

"No, this was before that. A couple of male hippies. I don't mean there was anything between them sex-wise. They just got friendly—you know, love everybody. Share everything. One was from out of town and the other, who had a pad in the Village, invites him up. So he goes. And the out-of-towner, he smells pretty bad so the host hippie suggests maybe he'd like to take a bath. So the visiting hippie says fine and takes a bath.

"Meanwhile, the host hippie decides to do his friend a favor and he washes out the visitor's clothes because they smelled pretty bad too. So the visiting hippie gets out of the tub and says, 'I want my clothes.' So the host hippie says, 'You can't have them.' 'I want my clothes.' 'You can't have them. I washed them.' So the visiting hippie picks up the host's cat and says, 'You give me my clothes or I'll kill your cat.' And the host hippie says, 'You kill my

cat and I'll kill you.' So the visiting hippie kills the cat and the host hippie kills him." Degnan laughed. "How's that for love power?"

Sessions said, "I wonder what the homicide rate is among hippies."

Degnan shrugged. "It probably matches the national average. People don't change their stripes just by putting on beads and boycotting barbershops."

Lyman was ready to autopsy then and the detectives drew around, Grinold hanging back a little. Though he'd been in the bureau three years and, as a detective, handled between four and five hundred cases a year, this was only his third autopsy.

Lyman went to work swiftly and efficiently and as soon as he had the body opened it was clear that the pelvic and leg fractures weren't the only injuries. Three ribs were broken and one had punctured the lung.

Sessions was leaning close now, watching with a practiced and fiercely quizzical eye. "What about this rib fracture, Doc?" He put a finger on the broken edge of bone. "Do you think she suffered that in the fall?"

"It's on the right side. She was lying on her right side."

"But it could have been a blow? She might have been hit?"

"Well, she might. I don't know that we can say definitely how that injury was caused."

"On the face there are contusions, right? I mean on the side that did not hit the pavement."

"She was probably struck. I think that's evident. I don't think she was submissive about this attack. She must have fought."

"She screamed like hell. I guess we can presume she fought."

"Is there any evidence at the scene?"

Sessions shook his head. "Nothing. We went back and hung around while Latent Prints did a job. They got some smudges and some partials that were unidentifiable. Mostly on the wall, but that wouldn't prove anything in any event."

"Nothing on the window ledge or fire escape?"

"No. The paint was too thick to take a print." Sessions

shrugged. "The lab got a few things. Scrapings from the ledge and the fire escape rail. I don't know what Sokolsky got off the body itself."

"Mostly hairs, I think. I swabbed a little semen out of her vagina but it's not much help. It wasn't fresh enough to identify."

Lyman went on with the autopsy and made the further finding that the girl's liver had been lacerated and a great deal of blood had collected in the abdominal cavity. Sessions jumped on that. "How did that happen, Doc? And don't tell me that was damage from the fall."

"It's possible that it was. A four story fall? A lot of things will happen."

"Could it have been from a blow?"

"You mean somebody hitting her with something? Yes, that's possible too."

"Could he do it with his fist alone, or would he need something to go with it?"

Lyman allowed as how a fist could do it. The main thing was the concentration of great force on a small area. If a man's fist hit the right spot, it could drive the liver against the spine with sufficient power to produce lacerations.

"Except," Grinold said, "there aren't any bruise marks on the body. If she was hit—"

"The bruises, if she was hit, wouldn't show right away," Lyman told him. "They will in about twenty-four hours—if she's got any."

Sessions pointed. "What about the blood in there? She did a hell of a lot of internal bleeding. That's from the liver injury, isn't it?"

Lyman said it was.

"Did she bleed to death?"

"Well, I don't know, but she very well might."

"But that wouldn't happen right away. Isn't that right, Doc? She'd have to be bleeding for quite a while for all that blood to accumulate."

"Yes. Quite a long time. No question about it."

"And the bleeding would have had to take place before she

hit the pavement. Otherwise there would have been more external bleeding—more blood on the scene?”

“Yes, Frank. The liver injury had to precede the fall.”

“And she could have bled to death before she hit the pavement?”

“She could have.”

“Even if she was alive when she went over the rail, with all that internal bleeding, she couldn’t possibly have thrown herself over that railing—or even got to the railing, could she?”

“I can’t say for sure. What are you suggesting?”

“I’m suggesting that he beat her about the head and body to subdue her and, in the process, fatally injured her. I make it that while he was raping the girl she was dying. I don’t know how long he took with her or how many times he attacked her, or how many others might be involved in the attack, but I figure by the time he was through, she was dead. And because she was dead, he threw her out the window, went over the roofs, hid her clothes and left by the stairs of the next building.”

Lyman said, “That’s a perfectly plausible theory. If she didn’t jump, it could explain her being thrown. It’s not likely that a man, bent on rape, would throw the girl out the window when he’s through unless she were already dead. In other words, his aim is rape, not murder.”

“But I’m not after just a plausible theory. Is that what really happened? Was she dead when she went out that window?”

“The amount of blood that collected is some evidence in that direction. She had to lose it while her heart was still pumping and it looks like a fatal amount—probably accumulating over a period of an hour or two hours.”

“Do you think you can do away with the probablys?”

Lyman cut out a small piece of lung tissue and found no sign of blood. “If she had been alive when she fell,” he said, “the chances are strong that she would have taken at least one breath after she hit—by reflex action if nothing else. And from the way she’s smashed, that breath would have contained blood. But there’s no sign of it.”

“And that means it’s homicide?”

Lyman nodded. “That’s what it looks like.” He laughed. “And here I thought you homicide detectives were always hoping for accident or suicide verdicts so you’d be off the hook. You really want it to be homicide.”

Sessions laughed himself. “I must be getting carried away.” He put a hand on the dead girl’s knee. “But this little kid shouldn’t be lying here all cut up. She should be getting ready for Sunday school right now. And I don’t want the son of a bitch who put her here going to jail for rape. I want to nail him for murder.”

CHAPTER VII

After the autopsy, Sessions and Grinold went up to Al Sokolsky's lab on the third floor. Sokolsky, a short, bald, pleasant-faced man with dark hair and a stocky physique, sat down with them and said, "What do you want to know?"

"What you got off of the body."

"I got a variety of things but I can't give you too much that's definite except what I got from her hands and feet. They were bagged, which means, unless she was handled at the scene, that we have pure information—scrapings from under the fingernails, dirt from her feet and ankles. The rest of her body is contaminated. Really, it should have been bagged the way her hands were."

"You didn't find anything that means anything, then?"

"Oh, I found a lot of things. For example, Negro pubic hairs in her pubic region. Now the trouble is that all of the attendants in this office are Negro. You bring in an uncovered body. It's handled. It's wheeled around. All kinds of contamination is going to take place. You've got hairs on your clothes—pubic hairs, all kinds of hairs. You've got lint, all kinds of things. Now I will say this. The number of Negroid pubic hairs that I found in the pubic region pretty well establishes that she was assaulted by one or more Negroes and only Negroes. In other words, there are no hairs belonging to Caucasians in the pubic region—other than her own. But, on the other hand, if I am called as a witness and the defense asks me if it is not possible that pubic hairs from Negro

attendants handling the body could have landed on the body, I would have to testify that it certainly is possible. Do you understand?"

Sessions said sure, he understood, but the main point was that they were looking for Negro perpetrators. "Can you tell whether it's one or more than one?"

Sokolsky couldn't.

"You get anything else from the body?"

Sokolsky lighted a cigarette. "There are particles of skin under her fingernails. She presumably scratched her assailant. Also, the police lab brought me in some things. There are bits of skin on the window ledge and the fire escape railing. On the body there are spots where the skin has been scraped as if it had been dragged over things like window ledges and fire escape railings."

"Indicating she didn't jump herself?"

"That's what it would indicate. At least that's the way I'd interpret it."

"Her clothes were found—" Sessions said.

Sokolsky threw up his hands at that. "I know all about her clothes being found. And I know that just about every last detective in the police department had his hands on those clothes. Dammit, doesn't anybody understand what we're trying to do here? Whatever I find on those clothes, it's not going to mean a damned thing for there's absolutely no way of telling whether it came from the murderer or from some detective."

"All right, that means you can't testify in court—"

"I can testify but the testimony will be full of holes. I can find out what kinds of hairs, fibers, seeds, dirt, particles of grass and whatnot are on the clothes, and I can tell you what they are. But I certainly can't tell you what they mean. If those clothes had been put right into a sealed bag and only the finder touched them, then they might tell a story."

That was it at the M.E.'s office and the two detectives returned to the twenty-fifth squad. Yucker was there and so was Lieutenant Hugh Farquhar, new boss of homicide. Farquhar normally took weekends off but the death of a young white girl in Harlem

would attract a good deal more than average attention. A lot of people in a lot of places would be asking a lot of questions and Farquhar wanted to be on top of things all the way. So, instead of a late Mass, he went to an early one, and instead of fishing this afternoon, he would be spending it helping unravel the death that was starting to cause such a stir.

"Anything from Emergency Service on that purse?" was Sessions' first question when he entered the room.

Yucker shook his head. "Not a trace of it and they scoured the block. Help yourself to coffee." He gestured at the pot. "So the girl was dead before she hit the ground?"

Grinold, who had phoned that in after the autopsy, said, "That's what the evidence says." He grinned. "Sessions wanted a homicide. He's got it."

Farquhar laughed. "Sessions wanted a homicide? What's the matter, Frank? Aren't we keeping you busy enough?"

"Hell," Sessions said, pouring coffee. "It's not what I want, it's what it is. Homicide, pure and simple."

"Just another homicide," Farquhar said. "That's all."

"That's right, Lieu. Just another homicide." Sessions snorted. "Jesus, and we've already a hundred and forty this year. We're a whole month ahead of last year."

"What'd she die of?"

"Heavy internal bleeding—lacerated liver, ruptured spleen, fractured ribs, punctured lung. I don't know what the son of a bitch hit her with but he broke her in pieces. She was dying while he was raping her. In fact, by the time he was finally finished with her, she was probably dead. And she didn't die all at once. So it's anybody's guess how long he kept attacking her. Maybe he only stopped because he found she was turning cold."

"Any semen?"

"Yeah, but they can't classify it."

Yucker said, "Was a weapon used?"

"The M.E. thinks no. Just fists."

"You search the room?"

"Yeah, after the lab got through. There's nothing there."

"So he beat her to death to make her submit? She fought too hard. What's the old saying? 'When rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it.'"

Sessions, lighting a cigarette, said, "There were severe lacerations of her vagina. The guy was too big for her. I don't think she could have enjoyed it if she wanted to."

"I wonder what that would feel like—getting split inside like that."

"I sure as hell wouldn't want to find out."

Farquhar said, "And she wasn't a junkie?"

"There're no signs of her being a junkie. And if she'd been much of a one it'd show. So, if she was on anything, she was new at it."

Grinold said, "Of course, with shooting galleries, they've got guys there who know how to put the needle in. And they're on hand to indoctrinate the novices. She could've been a novice and some guy there was handling the needle."

"Except," Yucker said, "I looked over the reports and when we raided the place we picked up everybody who was anybody. At least, according to our informant we did. I can have the men lean on him again to see if he's holding anything back, but they were pretty sure they'd done the job." He went to his desk and brought back a small packet of blue cards. "By the way, here's what we got out of the fifty-two file. Twenty-one men in the area convicted of sex offenses."

Sessions took the elastic off the cards and started through them slowly. "Any of them picked up in that raid?"

"Not any of them, no."

Grinold said, "He probably won't be a real junkie. He's too big and strong."

"But he'll live in the area," Yucker said. "If he knows about the shooting gallery, he's not going to be any stranger."

Farquhar said, "How do we know it's a 'him'? It might be a 'them.' People like that usually work in pairs. Or gangs."

Sessions agreed that she might have been gang-raped, but he had the feeling it was the work of one man.

"Why, Frank?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. The fact there's only one girl. What's she doing there? If she was a junkie going to a shooting gallery with her little glassine envelope, the rape would be an incidental thing. Some neighborhood stud would see her coming and going and decide to intercept her. In which case, he wouldn't be likely to bring in anybody else on the deal. Not anybody as ruthless as this perpetrator.

"The other angle is that she wasn't a junkie. In which case, she got lured to the shooting gallery. A young, white kid getting lured by a black man to a place like that—? What's that sound like? She doesn't know New York. She's trusting—particularly trusting of black people. That makes her sound like one of those guilt-ridden, middle-class whites who feel so personally responsible for the black man's plight they have to expunge their guilt by believing only white people are evil and all black men are saints."

Farquhar laughed. "I won't say you're losing us, Frank, but what the hell has trusting black people got to do with the theory that there's only one rapist? That might explain why she came up to Harlem—she was a trusting soul—but if you're going to tell a story about a Negro going down to the Village somewhere to pick up stray young white girls and lure them up to shooting galleries, why wouldn't it be more likely he's fronting for a gang of rapists than that he's doing it only for himself?"

Frank shrugged, scowled, looked at his cigarette and took another drag. "I don't know what gives me the feeling—yes, I do know." He blew out a thick cloud of smoke. "That's the trouble with this business. So many of your ideas come from combinations of little things you add together in your subconscious out of habit. It's hard to stop and realize just what the train of thought was. At first I was figuring it was the fact she was alone, but that's not it. What really persuades me is what he did to her. She wasn't a big girl, nor especially strong. He is. He doesn't know his own strength. He beats her to death getting her to submit. He's so wild and so frustrated by her attempts to defend herself, he hits her with everything he's got. If he had anybody else in it with him,

would that kind of force be necessary? If he had one or more other guys in it with him, they could just hold her for him."

Yucker said, "Yeah. That makes sense."

"So you figure," Farquhar put in, "it's most likely a Negro male known in the area?"

"Known in it and knows it."

Yucker said, "And if he hasn't been busted as a sex-offender, he's probably been busted for narcotics."

Sessions nodded. "It's a fair guess narcotics has a sheet on him." He flipped through the blue cards from the 52 file and said, "But first off, let's see what these guys were doing last night. Or which of them has blown town." He got out his notebook and started to copy down names and addresses.

Yucker said, "And if that canvass turns up one or more people who saw a white girl with a black man, we can take them downtown and show them some pictures."

Grinold said, "We may pick something up off the street. Some informant will very likely phone in a tip."

Sessions agreed that was probably the best bet. "With something like this the guy's going to talk. He'll have a pal or somebody to brag to. We should be picking up rumors. But the hell with sitting around waiting for them. I'm going to go out and dig."

CHAPTER VIII

At 10:30 that evening, Frank Sessions opened an apartment door on Third Avenue between 92nd and 93rd Streets. Inside was a short hall with mailboxes on the left, a pair of steps ahead, and a glass-paned door that opened with a key.

Sessions stopped and opened the mailbox, felt inside and found nothing. Outside of occasional junk mail, nothing was what Frank Sessions usually found when he opened his box. Very few people wrote to Frank Sessions for very few people like a one-sided correspondence.

There were letters in the history of time that bore Frank's signature. There were, in fact, three letters still extant that he had written as a child. Two were to his mother about his activities at camp when his signature was a ten-year-old's scrawl. The third was to his fifth grade teacher, consisting of, on assignment, a three sentence recapitulation of his summer's experiences.

Then there was an application expressing a desire to become a member of New York's Finest, handed in (and accepted) some sixteen years before. There were, in addition, a few letters in private collections: half a dozen to his sister-in-law and brother, and one to a fan who wrote him following a magazine article on big, bold, brave, real-life detectives and how they operated. Frank had, in response to sufficient requests from downtown, revealed enough about a case of his for the writer to produce an article that attracted three letters from interested and/or fascinated readers. Two of the letters, from females who saw his ac-

companying picture and were interested in his marital status, he ignored. The third, from a retired law-man in Georgia who was impressed by the know-how of a big-city force, he did reply to. It was the only such letter he had ever answered.

Closing the mailbox, he let himself through the inner door, walked to the staircase and climbed three flights. He did the climb rapidly and without much thought but there was growing realization in the back of his mind that the steps would eventually pose something of a problem. He was in his late thirties and in passable, if not excellent physical shape. He could stand more weight than he carried and there were those—especially women—who wanted to see him fatter. The trouble was, they wanted to fatten him up themselves, on a permanent basis. There was a doctor friend who also thought he'd last longer if he'd eat more and drive himself less. Sessions, however, could equally well surmise that the same would be true if he quit smoking, drinking, women, and everything else that made life livable. "Suppose I quit smoking and started eating," he told the doctor. "Suppose I got all this rest you're so hot for. The next thing you know, you'd be putting me on a diet to lose all the weight I'd be gaining." To Frank Sessions, all doctors (also psychiatrists, social workers, reformers, drunks, wives and children) sought to shape a man to fit a mold called "normal" and Frank's view was, "Who the hell wants *that*?" Frank Sessions was seldom motivated beyond immediate needs but if there was one thing in the world he would actually plot against, it was being "normal."

But the steps were still there to be coped with. As yet he could skip them two at a time and reach his floor before he reached the end of his rope. However, he was finding that the work, when it got hot and heavy, took a little more out of him every day than the night put back in. He lost weight on cases and it was more than a man should reasonably lose. Nor was it water loss, like a football player sweating off fifteen pounds in an afternoon, only to put it back again on the morrow. Frank's loss would be over the course of two or three weeks and it wasn't regained through

the consumption of liquids. If he didn't get a sufficient breathing spell, the weight remained lost or was very slow to return.

When he reached his apartment on this particular evening, he was feeling his age. He was even thinking about it and that was very strange. But he put it down to fatigue. It had been a very long, very hard day. He'd been up since half past four, had had only two and a half hours' sleep before that, and had scarcely sat down since.

He and Ernie Grinold had driven all over the Twenty-fifth Squad's area checking out the known sex criminals in the 52 file and it had been rugged. Questioning them wasn't the problem, it was tracking them down. ". . . Naw, he ain't in . . . Naw, I don't know where he went . . . Maybe he's at Joe's, shooting pool . . . Yeah, he'll be in around supper, maybe . . ."

And, of course, the criminals weren't about to look *them* up. ". . . Detective Sessions? I hear you wanted to talk to me about something. I'm glad to oblige you. Ask me anything you want. . . ." That would be the day.

By seven o'clock he and Ernie had actually talked to six of the twenty-one offenders. Then Ernie went home to his family, but Frank had kept on and nailed two more. That made eight interviews and thirteen men to go. Of the thirteen, six they hadn't gone after yet, four they hadn't been able to find, and three were said to be out of town—which made them of special interest.

After that he had reported the result to Sergeant Whelan in the two-five, stopped off at homicide to see what was going on (the men were all over at Harlem Hospital trying to get a dying statement from a knifing victim), then picked up the Ninety-sixth Street crosstown bus home.

The apartment he entered was small, the living room and kitchenette looking out on the back court, the bedroom and bath, over on the right, looking into the airshaft. He went through the living room switching on lights and the TV, entered the little kitchen, and pulled a can of beer out of an icebox containing a sixpack, some bacon, four eggs, a stick of butter and a quarter of

a quart of milk. He was a connoisseur of good food, but not in his own apartment.

He sat down on the daybed across from the TV, smoked a cigarette, drank the beer and watched what the station chose to lay before him. He did not change channels, he made no effort to find out what the evening's fare offered, he merely watched, letting the whole thing wash over him, commercials as well as subject matter. He watched with neither interest nor distaste, neither absorbed nor distracted. When he finished the cigarette, he went into the bedroom and hung his jacket very carefully on a hanger, removed his tie, and came back for more beer and another cigarette.

The phone rang when he was halfway through and he went back to the bedroom to answer it. A girl's voice said, "Frankie? This is Sheila."

He said, "Hello, sweetheart."

"I've been trying to get you all evening."

"I was working."

"How was she? Good?"

"I mean it. I've been working."

"Oh, wait. Did I hear about it? Is it that girl they found—the girl who went out the window up in Harlem?"

"That's the one."

"Gee, I'll bet you've been busy."

Sessions mashed the cigarette out in the tray on the bedside table beside the phone. "Yeah, I've been busy."

"Are you getting anywhere?"

"We're making progress."

"You sound awfully cool, Frank."

"I'm tired."

"I know. You must be, sweetheart."

"Did you want something?"

"Oh, Frank. I'm sorry. I know you hate having women call you up. But don't be angry."

"I'm not angry."

"You sound so distant—say, am I interrupting something? You've got somebody there, don't you?"

"No, I'm alone."

"I don't believe you."

"So don't believe me."

"Frankie, tell me you're not lying."

"I'm not lying."

"Because I want to believe you. I'm jealous. I shouldn't tell you that, but I'm jealous. I try not to be, but it's—I'm sorry, Frank. Listen, I do believe you. But look, are you really alone? Can you talk?"

"Sure I can."

"I know you're tired and that's kind of what I was calling up about. I wanted to find out—how would you like me to make breakfast for you tomorrow morning?"

He smiled, but with little amusement. "Where?"

"Here—my place. Or your place. Why don't we make it your place? You're tired and you could relax. I could be there in twenty minutes."

"And that would be relaxing?"

She laughed. "Well, it would be a change of pace."

He smiled, this time with a little more warmth. "Thanks, sweetheart, thanks but no thanks. I'd rather sleep tonight and get my own breakfast in the morning."

"You can still have the breakfast. I'll tell you what. I'll come over tonight and get you the breakfast in the morning, but I won't bother you. How'd that be?"

"You wouldn't bother me? Are you kidding?"

"I mean it. No passes. I'll be a good girl, I'll sleep on the edge of the bed. You won't even know I'm there."

"The answer is no. I've got things on my mind."

Her voice got sharper. "Are you sure you haven't got a woman there? When Frank Sessions turns down a beautiful body—and I've got a damned beautiful body and you know it—when I get a turndown, I got to believe the guy's either just had a beautiful

body or he's in the process of having one. There just isn't any other reason."

"I said I'm tired."

"You're never that tired. And nobody knows that better than I do."

"Then say I'm not in the mood."

"And suppose the next time you call, I'm not in the mood?"

Frank said in a quiet voice, "Is that a threat, Sheila?"

"Yes it is. Oh, no it isn't." Her voice turned into a wail. "Please. I'm sorry. I didn't want to fight. I'm just lonely and frustrated. I just need somebody bad for the moment and I thought maybe this time you wouldn't mind if I called you. Please don't be angry with me, Frank. I'm sorry if I blew up. You can call me any time."

"Thanks, Sugar. I'll take you up on that—another night."

They hung up and Frank lighted another cigarette. He couldn't understand it. Sheila was a bitch, but she was also a gorgeous gal, one of the most luscious he knew. And she was right. He never had been too tired before. As for not being in the mood—? That was the laugh of a lifetime.

But he couldn't stomach it right then, and he didn't know why. Maybe he *was* getting old.

CHAPTER IX

The next day was Labor Day and, in the normal course of events (which was abnormal for Homicide) it would have been the first of Frank Sessions' two days off. The days off, in normal circumstances (which again were abnormal in Homicide) would be free time, a period when Frank or any other detective could amuse himself according to his habits, customs, or desires. Usually, however, much if not most of a detective's time off was spent catching up on the backlog of work.

The detectives in Homicide operated on a six-day rotation. There was a day duty, meaning from eight in the morning till five in the evening—except that, by mutual consent, the day men were relieved by the night men at four o'clock. This was to spare a poor detective from catching a homicide in that last hour and having to work half the night on it. Better to let the new men handle it. They'd be there for the night anyway.

After the day duty, there was an "open" day, meaning they didn't have to report but could spend the time catching up on the paperwork and whatever else they had hanging over their heads.

The day after that, or some 48 hours after they had last gone off duty, they reported in for the night tour. Again the hours were technically from 5:00 P.M. till 8:00 A.M. but all members of the Homicide Squad, Manhattan North, were in the office before four o'clock to give the day shift that extra hour's grace.

If all went well, with no new murders, and no previous homicides to concern him, when a man got off at eight o'clock in the

morning, he was free for the rest of that day, had the following two days off, and reported the morning after that for his next tour. Briefly then, a man who worked the day shift on Monday, would report again at four Wednesday afternoon to stand the night duty. When he left at eight in the morning on Thursday, he would, in theory, be free until Sunday morning when he would again report for day duty. When one figured vacations in on top of that, and the pay that a detective got in the New York Police Department, plus the other benefits, it made being a policeman—particularly a detective in the homicide squad—sound like a cush position.

The only trouble was it didn't work out quite that way. In the Manhattan North Homicide Squad, there were twenty-four men—one of whom (Peter Quent) was on permanent assignment to the Medical Examiners' office, leaving twenty-three detectives to handle the better than two hundred killings that came their way each year (and this year promised to exceed the usual expectancy by almost ten percent). This, of course, didn't include the near killings, the questionable deaths and all the rest that they had to look into in case a verdict of homicide made it their business. More realistically, the job could be described as a day duty period and a night duty period for collecting homicides and the rest of the time, days and nights, for investigating them.

On the tough cases where the guilty parties were not immediately apparent, or where more than routine investigation was required to make an arrest, the detective was taken off the block—meaning he was relieved of his normally scheduled tours and left free to spend all his time investigating that one case. Nor would he be put back on the schedule chart until either he had the necessary evidence to bring a suspect before a grand jury or he had exhausted all avenues of investigation and had nowhere to go.

And, of course, detectives were taken off the chart for other reasons too. There were assignments to the District Attorney's office when a case was being readied for trial. There were vaca-

tions and there were sick leaves. One could expect twenty-five percent of the squad to be off the block at a given time for one reason or another.

Frank Sessions, however, was not yet off the block on this case. He wasn't due to stand another duty until Wednesday morning so there was plenty of time to wait and see what developed.

Most of the papers had already carried the story and only the evening papers with no Sunday editions hadn't had their chance. They were the ones concentrating on off-beat angles or exclusive interviews, but little of this would affect Frank Sessions. Reporters were hitting the higher-ups and using what tricks they knew to con police officers into revealing information that wasn't supposed to be made public. "Hello, Lieutenant. This is Captain So-and-So. What's going on in this case of the unidentified girl? Fill me in." That was one of their tricks and it frequently worked.

But it didn't work down at Frank Sessions' level. The high brass in the police department didn't call him for information and reporters who tried to trick him that way were wasting their time. But they wasted their time with Frank anyway. He was adept at telling them what was already public information and referring them to higher authorities for anything else. Frank knew better than to go out on a limb. To survive in any organization, one must go through channels and he knew it. Get that other signature on the order. Get it on the written record exactly who told you to do exactly what. And no one knew how to handle channels and records better than Frank. He had learned it early and he had learned it the hard way.

On this Labor Day morning, at shortly after eight o'clock, he walked into the Boro room on the top floor of the Twenty-fourth Precinct building and went into the homicide office. Romolo Romero and Jim Murtry were there, Romero sorting through papers at the desk and sipping coffee. He was an officer in the Detectives Endowment Association and the papers had to do with DEA affairs. He looked up and said, "Hey, Frank. What're you doing here?"

Frank said, "I work here. What the hell?"

"I thought you'd be over in the two-five. The lieutenant just called. He wants us over there too."

Frank said he'd check his box and ride over with them. He went out to the set of small personal lockers beside the door and looked through his for notes or messages. Reggie Allen, the third member of Romero's team, came back with a mug of coffee from the urn. He was a Negro of average size with a young face but graying hair around the temples. He said hello and, "I hear you caught the one about the white girl who got raped."

"Yeah. That's my load of grief."

"You got nothing on it, then?"

"So far it's just groping in the dark. We're even reduced to hitting known sex-offenders in the area which should give you some idea where we stand."

Reggie laughed. "You really *are* groping in the dark."

Frank closed the locker and got a cup of coffee for himself before the four detectives left for the Twenty-fifth Squad. They went down to car 410 and got in with Romero driving. He headed east and said, "How do you figure her, Frankie? She a junkie?"

"Hippie is more like it." Sessions told them about her smooth arms and hick, unstylish clothes.

"Anything from Missing Persons?"

"Not yet. Not fitting her description."

"And no tips?"

"No, but it's early. Give it a couple of days and we ought to have a pretty good picture of what happened. If we don't, then we really are in trouble."

Romero said, "If you don't, we're all going to be in trouble."

Reggie said, "It's that bad?"

"It's getting a lot of space," Romero reminded him. "A young white girl raped and murdered in Harlem in a shooting gallery? And nobody knows who the hell she is or where she's from? That's a newspaperman's dream."

Sessions said, "And a detective's nightmare."

Murtry said, "You getting anywhere with the sex-offender line of investigation?"

Frank shrugged. "I don't know if there's anything there or not. We've got twenty-one guys with records. Six of them have beards or goatees or hippie-length hair and, as such, could go down to the East Village and lure runaway kids up to Harlem with the promise of acid or speed or something. But we don't have any of them using that *modus operandi*." He lighted a cigarette. "But a beard or long hair—what the hell does that mean? Nothing. Especially when we're only guessing the girl was a hippie."

Romero said, "You think she might have come in from Chicago? From the convention there to start something here? After all, they can't just sit back and rest on their laurels."

Sessions said, "Not from the cut of her clothes," and Murtry said, "What do you mean laurels? What did they win in Chicago?"

"They damaged the policeman's image all over the country, and no getting around it, Jim. We all got hurt. We got hurt bad."

"Because those Chicago cops gave them a few belts where it would do them the most good?"

"You're damned right. Just because of that."

"But those God-damned hippies were throwing shit at the cops. And urine. And calling them every foul name in the book. You can't blame the cops for getting rough with them. Especially if they got hit with some of that stuff."

Romero said, "It doesn't matter. If cops and kids mix it up, the public sides with the kids. It's one of the facts of life. And it hurt us in Chicago."

Sessions said, "So it's another black eye. So what else is new?"

"So the black eyes add up. Take your case. You make an arrest on it and people will hardly notice. But if you can't find the perpetrator, you watch the hue and cry. 'Nobody's safe,' the papers will scream. 'The cops can't protect us.' That's what I'm talking about. You get enough black eyes and nobody can find anything good to say about you."

"Who ever did say anything good about a cop?"

"We used to have a good image, Frank."

Sessions laughed. "You mean cops feeding ice cream cones to lost children or delivering babies in taxicabs? You've been read-

ing too much of our own propaganda. I'm only a cop because my old man was a cop. Otherwise, I would have thought the way the other kids thought—that every cop was on the take. You show me any middleclass or upper-middleclass citizen who doesn't think a man becomes a policeman either because he's too stupid to make a go of it in any other job, or he's a sadist who wants to beat people, or he's lusting for the power of the uniform so he can push around all the people who wouldn't let him in their back doors if he didn't have that shield."

Murtry said, "What the hell has images got to do with solving homicides anyway? Who cares what people think? Get in there and do the job. That's all that matters."

Frank said, "Not to Ronnie. Now that he's a wheel in the DEA he's public relations conscious."

"It's not as funny as you think," Romero said. "I'm predicting, Frank, that if you don't solve this case, you're going to suffer."

And Frank replied, "If I don't solve it, you can bet I'll suffer."

CHAPTER X

Grinold and three squad detectives were with Yucker and Farquhar when the Homicide men arrived. The new men were given a briefing and the case was hashed over. There was canvassing still to do, there were sex-offenders still to track down and their alibis to check out.

Farquhar had been in touch with Missing Persons. They had a full description of the girl, the marks and scars—mole on left hip, small mole under left scapula, one inch scar on right shin. They had her dental record, her fingerprints and Lyman's report on her medical condition. With that information they would send out an "endeavoring" on a thirteen state alarm and see what the inquiry would produce. When the morticians in the M.E.'s office finished reconstructing her face, they would photograph her and circulate pictures.

Tracing the girl through Missing Persons, or picking up information through informants were the only promising hopes for a solution. Canvassing might produce a breakthrough, but questioning known sex-offenders was admittedly a desperation measure. As Sessions pointed out, when you calculated the daily male birthrate in Harlem and estimated that roughly that many youths were having their first sex experience each day, the number of possible perpetrators whom the police didn't know anything about was staggering.

Nevertheless, the detectives couldn't sit around and wait for

Missing Persons or informants to produce. They had to get out and dig.

For the others there were inquiries to be made around Harlem but Frank had different plans for himself. He wanted to go downtown.

"Downtown?" Yucker said. "What do you have in mind?"

"I want to start at the other end. If she's the runaway we think she is, she probably came to Greenwich Village or the East Village. I want to go down there and see if I can backtrack on the girl. At the same time, I'll show around the pictures BCI sent up of our sex-offenders. Who knows? I might get a make."

Grinold said, "Talk to the guys in the Ninth Squad. Or the Sixth. They might know something."

Sessions nodded. "Them," he said, "but first I'm going to try Homicide South."

The meeting broke up at 9:30 and the other detectives drove north. Frank Sessions stood on a street corner and waited for a bus heading the opposite way.

The offices of the Homicide Squad, Manhattan South, were on floor C of the white brick, Thirteenth Precinct building on East Twenty-first Street that connected with the Police Academy on Twentieth. The offices were small and compact, consisting of a narrow outer room with file cabinets, lockers and a couple of desks, and a smaller inner office for Lieutenant Thomas Quinlan, the commanding officer. Side doors led to the burglary squad's office on the left and the hall to the dormitory room in back.

When Sessions got there, Quinlan was in his office and two other detectives were in the outer room; a dark-haired, swarthy, easy-going man named Jacoby, and a young, heavy-set blond named Bill Fish. Quinlan, a quiet, relaxed man with thinning gray hair, came out to shake hands and greet Frank by name. They had never worked together but their paths had crossed before. Frank had a way of getting around and the people he met didn't forget him. This included Jacoby as well as Quinlan, but Fish was new. There were introductions and Frank outlined the case, telling where the girl had been found, where she had

been killed, and what they suspected she had come to New York about.

Quinlan said, "You figure this perpetrator likes young white virgins? That's a common-enough preference in the black community these days."

"What about the M.O., though? Usually the blacks who gang-rape these kids live in the hippie area. If our thinking is right, we have a spade who lives in Harlem and takes his prey up there. It's done, but it's not done often."

"And you wonder if we have the names of anybody who does it? Jocko," he said to Jacoby, "call the Ninth and Sixth. See if they have anybody on file with an M.O. like that."

Jacoby picked up the phone and Quinlan turned to Fish. "How about you, Bill? You were around there. Did you pick up anything along those lines?"

Fish said, "I don't recall anything with a Harlem twist."

Frank sat on a corner of the desk. "You been around hippies much?"

"I was working on a case a year ago. Took me most of the summer. I got pretty friendly with a lot of them. It took a while, but eventually they came to accept me."

Quinlan said, "Bill can tell you all the inside stuff. He's the authority."

"Hell, I'm no authority," Bill disclaimed. "That was last year and things have changed. I'm not that much in touch any more. You want some authorities, you talk to Jimmy Bell, a patrolman in the Sixth Precinct. He knows them all. In fact, he's specially assigned—only works ten at night to four in the morning. Or talk to Inspector Finkle in the Ninth."

Sessions made notes. He said, "But what about this M.O.? By and large it's different, isn't it?"

Quinlan said, "Well, maybe and maybe not. You know how it is, Frank. You get a couple of runaways coming into New York—runaway girls. They'll end up at Washington Square or Tompkins Square. And they're up for grabs. They're apt to come in with money and they'll be looking for LSD or a place to stay and

this, of course, makes them sitting ducks for anything anybody wants out of them. Money, sex, anything. What the hell. For every dinner there's going to be an appetite. Bring in the innocent children and the vultures gather. The kids aren't going to stay innocent long. And these youngsters aren't just sitting ducks for white gangs. They're special prey for colored gangs too. A couple of these Negro youths pick up a couple of runaways and the runaways don't dare brush them off. They're afraid it'll make them look prejudiced, and this fear is what the blacks are playing on. So they take the girls under their wing and get them up to their rooms somewhere, usually with the promise of LSD, and then the whole gang appears and they all rape the girls. And then, when they're through, they tell the girls it won't do them any good to report this to the police because, in the first place, they all look alike to the girls and the girls wouldn't be able to describe them. And, secondly, if they go to the police, the police will learn they're runaways and call their parents. So most of the time the girls keep their mouths shut."

"Fun city," Jacoby said from the telephone.

"Asphalt Jungle is the more apt description," Quinlan said. "So, to get back to what you were asking, Frank, I'd say the general pattern of your case isn't unusual, but certain particular features of it are. For instance, that the girl was alone. They more likely come in pairs. And that the perpetrator took her up to Harlem. What's the story there? Was he the only rapist or do you figure there were others involved?"

Sessions shrugged. "So far we don't know, but we lean to the loner theory. For one thing, I don't think a gang would have killed her. For another, I can't see a gang sitting up in Harlem waiting for one member to go downtown and pick up victims. I'd expect them to have a place closer at hand or, at the very least, to have a car. Get the girl in a car and they can take turns raping her while they're driving, then let her out in the sticks somewhere."

Quinlan rubbed his chin. "You know what this case makes me think of? Jack the Ripper. I mean a guy who goes along in nor-

mal fashion for a while and then he gets a certain urge and he goes out hunting—to rape a girl, like your subject, or poison a prostitute like the Ripper. In other words, it makes me think of someone who doesn't do this on a steady basis. If he wanted to rape white virgins every day, he'd set up shop down where they are instead of bringing them out where he is."

Sessions nodded. "I know what you mean. And there's one other thing. I'm wondering if there might have been a witness."

"To the rape?"

"To part of it at any rate. If the girl really was a runaway, would she be coming into New York all by herself? A young kid like that? I don't see it. She'd usually have a girlfriend with her. So it occurs to me that just maybe the perpetrator took two girls up to that shooting gallery and planned to do a job on them both. And maybe he did. And maybe he had to beat them both up but only one of them died. The other left again when it was over."

"And reports it to the police?"

"More likely not. Maybe she's still a prisoner. Maybe it's something like that weird one we had in the two-oh, the girl hippie there."

"Which one was that?"

"This girl comes into the two-oh one morning and she tells a story the detective doesn't really believe for one second. It's too far out. The story is that she and a boy, both hippies and full of love and all that jazz, encounter this Negro hippie. They get friendly and they end up going out to the spade's pad in Harlem. There he starts attacking the girl. The boyfriend objects so the spade kills him. Then he screws the girl, plugs her, gets her to blow him, takes pictures of her—the whole bit. Then he gets her to help him wrap up the body in a sheet and take it out of the apartment and dump it in an alley. Then they go back in the apartment and screw some more. Then they go out and get some breakfast and get on a subway downtown. So, at Seventy-second Street, she jumps off the train, goes to the nearest police headquarters and reports the story."

Sessions laughed shortly. "As I say, the detectives didn't be-

lieve her, but they took her for a ride looking for the body. The trouble was, she didn't know where she'd been and every place looked pretty much the same. But they finally got her to some place she recognized and, lo and behold, there was the body, just the way she told it."

Quinlan rubbed his chin again. "That's a similar M.O. You think it could be the same perpetrator?"

"Not him. He got picked up. It's not the same neighborhood either."

Jacoby hung up the phone and said, "No dice, Frank. Neither squad has a complaint on a guy operating on that M.O. Of course that doesn't mean there aren't some guys doing it. But we haven't heard about it."

Frank erased his cigarette and stood up. "Well, that doesn't leave us with a hell of a lot to work on. But what we want to do is make inquiries around the East Village on the off chance somebody might have seen the girl. When we get pictures of her, we'll really blanket the area."

Fish said, "You know how long she was in town, Frank?"

"Saturday might have been her first day. I doubt it could've been more than her second."

"There's a guy named Callagan. I got to know him pretty well. He went down to New Orleans last winter but he may be back. Callagan is kind of a central clearing house. What goes on in hippieland, he hears about it. If you're a runaway in need of a bed, Callagan will supply it. He lives in a loft—or he did when I knew him—and he used to bunk in as many as thirty hippies on the floor of his pad at a time. If you can find him, he's apt to know something. He will if anybody will."

Sessions took out his notebook. "You got an address?"

Fish told him Avenue B between Tenth and Eleventh. He didn't know the number but he described the doorway. It was painted in psychedelic colors and the door looked like part of a packing case.

CHAPTER XI

There was no longer any door in the entrance at all and when Frank arrived, the only thing that identified it were the chalk designs in psychedelic curlicues and colors on the inside wall where a flight of wooden steps went up.

On the second floor there was a hall with doors on both sides. The first doorway was without a door, however, and hanging strings of multi-colored beads formed a kind of curtain. The room beyond was nearly bare. There was a straw mattress against the wall below a grimy window, there were a couple of orange crates covered with paper decorations, and nothing else except a barefooted girl wearing jeans and a man's shirt with the tails hanging out. Her back was to the door and she was over by the side wall chalking a very colorful and elaborate design on it. It would eventually cover the whole of the wall but at this point she had only outlined the first third and was chalking in the spaces with the meticulous care of a muralist working in a permanent medium.

Frank rapped on the door frame and the girl turned around. She was a tall creature, at least five nine, with a very sweet, very pretty, very young face. She crossed to the door walking with a beautifully erect carriage, pushed the strings of beads aside, and leaned easily against the door frame. The shirt was sweaty, the soles of her feet were black, her ankles and hands were dirty. A rash of blackheads was erupting around her nose, and her hair, which was long, straight and blonde, was greasy looking. These

were, however, matters that were of no concern to the girl. She smiled and said, "Yes?" to the detective with a warm desire to help.

Frank introduced himself and showed his shield. The girl smiled at it and at him with a pitying air. "What can I do for you?"

He asked about Callagan. She shrugged and said she didn't know the man.

Three long-haired, bearded youths in dungarees, one carrying his shirt over his back, came up the stairs with a couple of bags of groceries. When they saw Sessions, they got noisy with questions. "Hey, Lisa. Whatchoo got, company?"

Lisa smiled at them fondly. "It's the fuzz."

"No shit."

The three gathered close to inspect the detective. "Hey, look at that. It's fuzz."

"It's real fuzz."

"What is he looking for, Lisa? LSD?"

"He want to take a trip, Lisa?"

"Hey, Lisa. Tell him how you'd rather fuck us for nothing than fuck anybody else for dough."

"Yeah. Tell him."

She nodded and said to the detective, "That's true."

Sessions said, "Any of you know Callagan?"

"Callagan?"

One of the youths said, "He's long gone, man."

"He went south last winter," another said.

"He's farther gone than that," the first said. "Man, he's dead."

"Dead?" the second said.

"He died down there."

"That's a shame. Callagan was a sweet guy."

"They don't come any better. Give you the shirt off his back."

"When he happened to have a shirt."

"What do you want with Callagan, fuzz?"

Sessions said it wasn't Callagan. They were trying to discover the identity of a girl who died—a young hippie.

The boys said that was a shame, about the young girl dying. But they didn't know any young girls who died.

"Maybe you might have seen her." Frank gave a description of her appearance, the clothes she wore.

It drew a blank. So did questions about a big Negro coming down from Harlem posing as a hippie and picking up girls. Frank took out the twenty-one mug shots of the convicted sex-offenders and let the boys and the girl look through them slowly. They paused over the half dozen who wore their hair longer than usual but none of the faces registered. "What lousy looking pictures," one of the boys said. "They ought to hire a new photographer."

"You don't know any of those people?"

"Hell, fuzz, why should we? You think every one of us knows every other one of us? We got our own group. We do our own thing. Other heads do their thing. That's their business."

"Hey, fuzz, you ever take a trip?"

"Hey, Lisa, you wouldn't fuck a guy like him, would you?"

She smiled and shook her head.

"Where'd this girl die, fuzz?"

"Up in Harlem."

"Hey, I know. We know the one."

Frank said, "You know her?"

"We know who you mean. She went out the window. She was high on acid and thought she could fly. And there was nobody with her."

"She went out the window but she wasn't high on acid."

"Yeah? We heard she was."

"Where'd you hear that?"

"I don't know. Around. It's the story that's going around. She was out in some room they use for trips. That's what we heard."

Frank said, "Do you know who she was?—what her name was? We want to get in touch with her folks."

They didn't know. They didn't know anything about her.

"Do you know anybody who might?"

One said to the others, "How about that shop on Eleventh Street—with the sign in the window about being a go-between?"

"There's another one on Seventh."

"Yeah, listen, fuzz, try the shop on Eleventh. There's a guy who owns it, Tony Penza, who acts as a go-between between run-aways and their parents. You know, parents come to town wanting to drag the kids back. They leave messages with him. He passes whatever it is they want to say to the kid and tells the parents the answer."

"You can mail letters care of him too. He'll see they get delivered."

Frank said, "Whereabouts on Eleventh?"

"Up toward First. Left-hand side. You'll see a cardboard sign in the window."

Sessions said, "Thanks," and put the notebook away.

"Kiss him goodbye, Lisa."

She did, putting her hands on his shoulders and kissing him on the mouth. "Goodbye, fuzz," she said.

CHAPTER XII

Frank Sessions, opening his eyes to morning sunshine, looked first at his watch. It said 7:15 which meant he had time to pause and reflect on his surroundings.

They were strange surroundings. He was on a three-quarter bed in a modestly furnished sitting room and from an adjacent room off rear, came the smell of good coffee. His clothes were neatly hung on a coat tree, pants, jacket and shirt, and he himself was sleeping raw instead of in his underwear.

He frowned and had a little trouble remembering. There had been a long and arduous day of work. Labor Day it was and it had been a day of labor, all right—fruitless labor.

There had been the visit to Callagan's old homestead and the meeting with Lisa and her pals. After that, he had tried Tony's place and the other shop on Seventh Street. But they knew nothing about the girl and shook their heads at the pictures. Then he had tried all the subway kiosks around Washington Square that could have taken the dead girl to the neighborhood of East 131st Street and that was to no avail. He even questioned the attendant in Tompkins Square Park, sweeping up litter after a Sunday night concert on the outdoor stage, but all that got him was the viewpoint that white girls went with Negro men to punish their parents.

And what else? He had seen to it that pictures of the offenders were printed up and distributed to the Sixth and Ninth Precincts and Detective Squads and had talked to policemen and detec-

tives there. Finally he had joined Grinold and the other detectives checking out the rest of the twenty-one names on their list. They now had a total of five who had left town. Two more still had to be tracked down and alibis had to be checked, but a major portion of that job was out of the way. He had also shown the twenty-one pictures to the super, but that only got him another blank. And the super still didn't have the names of any of the junkies who had been using the shooting gallery. He promised results soon, though.

And then what? He had stayed with it pretty long into the evening and then had ended up in a bar somewhere—Columbus Circle area, as he recalled.

A girl appeared in the doorway to the kitchen. She was dark-haired and petite with a pert face and an amused smile. The lounging robe she wore covered a trim, attractive figure; her hair, which was short and wavy, was brushed and tied with a ribbon, and the total effect was sugar candy. "Hi," she said. "If the smell of coffee woke you up, it was supposed to."

Now that he saw her he remembered her vaguely. What was surprising was that she turned out to be so attractive. She looked good even in the morning and that was far from always the case. Frank Sessions' choice of women was generally determined by their availability rather than their appearance. This time he had scored on both counts, a real stroke of fortune. He grinned at her. "All this and coffee too?"

"And I brew a mean cup, as you can well expect."

"Expect?"

She eyed him with the amusement still in her face. "That is if you remember who I am and what I do." She waited a half beat and shook her head. "But you don't, do you?"

He laughed. "There was this bar. We were in a bar."

She laughed too. "Go to the head of the class. We were in a bar."

"I don't remember the name of the bar. I'll only take a small giant step."

"I'll bet you don't remember the name of the girl either, do you?"

Frank shook his head. "I don't think I get to take any kind of a giant step."

"Try Marcia Page on for size. Does it grab you?"

"Is that your name? Mine is—"

"Yours is Frank Sessions. You're a detective. You solve murder mysteries."

He smiled. "Sometimes I solve murder mysteries."

"And you were in this bar and so was I. And you picked me up. Only you don't remember a thing about it."

"I do too. I was drinking Canadian Club."

"You certainly were. And you picked me up. And I let you. You weren't flying straight and I thought to myself, 'I may have trouble with this one.' But I let you pick me up anyway. And I don't know why, because I'm not really a soft touch. People don't just come along and pick up Marcia Page, airlines stewardess—I'm throwing that part in to explain why I brew a mean cup of java and also to spare you the embarrassment of not remembering what I am. Anyway, people don't just come along and pick up Marcia Page without so much as a by-your-leave. I'm fussy about the kind of people I'll let buy me a drink in a bar and I'm a lot fussier about the ones I'll let take me home afterward. As for coming up here and spending the night?" She regarded Frank quizzically. "You were drinking, you were unsteady, what was it about you? I think it was the look in your eyes that got me. You had such a strange look in your eyes."

"I've got cop's eyes."

"What do cop's eyes look like?"

"I don't know. Tired. They've seen too much of the worst of man and not enough of the best. They're jaundiced. They're disbelieving. They've heard it all before. They've seen it all before. Doctors—they never see anybody who's healthy. Cops—they never see anybody who's honest."

She shook her head. "That's not what I saw in your eyes. It was something else but I don't know what."

"You're probably lucky."

"Uh, uh. I'm not lucky. Only able. Anyway, Mr. Frank Sessions, Detective Second Grade—shield number—I forget the shield number—anyway, something about you got to me and I kicked over a few traces and here you are and here I am and the coffee's ready. Because, if I remember correctly, you have to be at work at eight o'clock."

"Not today. Today is my day off. Except that I'm working on a case. So there aren't any days off."

"What kind of a case is it?"

"A young girl raped and thrown out of a window."

Marcia made a face. "I'm sorry I asked. So that's what you were talking about?"

"When?"

"In your sleep. You are the worst person to try to sleep next to. You tossed and turned and moaned and groaned and mumbled as if somebody had turned off the sun and it wasn't going to be day any more. You are the most distressed man I ever met."

"How was I before all that?"

She laughed. "Now you sound like a man talking. If your ego needs flattering, you were very successful."

"How was I if my ego doesn't need flattering?"

She smiled at him. "You're good, Frank Sessions. You can make girls feel things they didn't know they knew how to feel. There was only one drawback. This girl couldn't avoid the impression that the detective wasn't feeling much of anything. I don't mean that the evidence didn't indicate the contrary, but you really weren't with it. You were detached. It didn't hit you the way it hit me. And yet—" She mused about it. "You were the one who couldn't stop. You were driven. But it wasn't by me. I could have been any girl—which, of course, doesn't do much for my ego, though what else could I expect from somebody I let pick me up in a bar? If it hadn't been me it would have been someone else." She laughed again but there was a brittle quality to it this time. "The life of an airlines stewardess. Always transient—not only in our ways but in our relationships. It's a one-night stop—

well, two nights here—and then off to somewhere else, a third of the way around the world or more. And you don't have relationships with the people in these places. You have liaisons. The only people you have relationships with are the people who fly the routes with you. The plane crew. These are the real people."

"So, what's bad about that?"

"The plane captains are mostly married—which doesn't necessarily stop some of them from being interested, it only stops me. But what it really means is that I end up in a Columbus Circle bar getting picked up by a Frank Sessions for a one-night stand." She held up a hand. "Don't say anything. That's what it sets out to be. I meet a man named Frank Sessions and he interests me. There's something about him. Maybe it's his problems. He's a man with many problems. I can't spell that out, I can only sense it. So we spend a little time together. It's a very great time—it really was, Frank—but it's also a very little time. It may be the only time there'll ever be and a girl thinks maybe that's kind of a shame. Because there could have been so much more. It could be made into a lifetime thing—exploring Frank Sessions' problems with him."

Frank laughed and got up. "Kid, you don't know how lucky you are. Who needs problems?"

"You've got them. Part of it's that murder case you're on. The girl who got raped and killed. But that's only part of it. There're other things too."

He put on his shorts, got himself his pack of cigarettes, offered her one she refused and lighted one for himself. He took her face in his free hand and kissed her on the lips. "You know something? You're quite a girl."

"Well thanks," she said. "You remember."

He laughed. "Jesus, can't you dames ever measure yourself in some other way than as a roll in the hay? Any girl can attract a man that way, and I mean *any* girl. And I know—partly from personal experience and partly from what I've encountered as a detective second grade, shield number—you don't remember. When I had the Times Square beat in uniform and I knew all

the prostitutes— Would you believe women in their fifties and sixties—with toothless gums—still making their living as prostitutes?” He laughed. “So don’t relate everything to the female competition in sex. I meant something else. I meant that you are a girl who can face the fact you went to bed with a man who doesn’t remember very well that he went to bed with you. That is about the greatest insult a woman could receive—in this sex business we were talking about. You can recognize this and still not hate the man. You can still make jokes.”

“Maybe it’s because I can’t blame you—you were that way to begin with. And maybe it’s because I’d like to see you another way sometime.”

He smiled and kissed her on the mouth again. “How many nights did you say you’re in town?”

“One more. Tonight.”

“Save it.”

CHAPTER XIII

Breakfast with a pretty airlines hostess was a good way to start a day, but it was Frank Sessions' only upbeat of the morning. Back at the two-five, there was still no identification from Missing Persons and no tips had come in off the street. That left the detectives with nothing more promising than the list of sex-offenders and that was petering out. Of the twenty-one, six were now definitely alibied, two were still to be interviewed and there were those five who had disappeared from town.

The five attracted the most police attention just because they were missing, but data on them was scanty. Vital statistics from the 52 file listed them as: Crawford Haines, Negro male, age 24. Ht. 5'11½", Wt. 162. Joseph Wallace, Negro male, age 31, Ht. 5'8¼", Wt. 158. Samuel Eustace Brown, Negro male, age 24, Ht. 6'2", Wt. 215. Paul Freedman, Negro male, age 28, Ht. 6'1¼", Wt. 225. Colin Bradford, Negro male, age 36, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 208.

The search for the men had produced a little further information. Haines had no present known address and was reputed to have been out of town for months. Joe Wallace lived with a Negro woman welfare recipient and was supposed to be the father of two of her three children. Joe had gone, according to the woman, down to Alabama to see his sick mother. He had left by bus on Friday. At least that was the claim she made, without being told (by the police at least) the reason for the inquiry.

As for Sam Brown, he lived with his sister, also a welfare recipient, and her six-year-old son. He was, according to the sister,

a sometime employee in a foundry, he had gone out of town with a friend about a job in Pittsburgh. He left Thursday. She had not heard from him since.

Paul Freedman lived with his mother and five brothers and sisters—at least when he chose to. Half the time she didn't know where he was. Most of the time he didn't tell her where he was going. But he did announce on this occasion that he was going to Detroit to see a friend about a business deal. He left town, so his mother said, Sunday afternoon.

Colin Bradford was another who lived with his mother, only she was aged and they lived alone. He too was gone on business, or at least that was her claim, and had taken off four days before.

For what it was worth, only Paul Freedman was conceded to be in town at the time of the Saturday night slaying.

For what it was worth, Sam Brown had bushy hair, long, but shaped. He was the only one of the five who looked passably like a hippie.

From the standpoint of vital statistics, Sam Brown, Paul Freedman, and just possibly Colin Bradford, were the only ones regarded as conceivably powerful enough to inflict fatal injuries with their fists.

None of this had any meaning in and of itself, but let evidence be found placing one of them near the scene of the slaying and it could become significant.

Sessions and Grinold spent the rest of the morning chasing down leads to the two non-missing offenders they still hadn't interviewed. They found one in a pool hall at eleven o'clock and ran the other to earth in his girl friend's flat at quarter past twelve. Grinold covered the back when Sessions knocked on the door but their quarry wasn't in position to make an escape for they caught him with his pants off. He was a most cooperative interviewee, answering questions quickly and not bothering to dress. He wanted the cops out as fast as possible so he could get back to the purpose of his visit.

Sessions and Grinold also hit the super again. He had two names for them—junkies who had used the shooting gallery. He

didn't know where they lived and it turned out it didn't matter. The two had been picked up in the raid and were still in the Tombs when the girl was killed.

They checked out a couple of alibis while they were at it, had a sandwich and coffee break, and got back to the two-five squad about quarter past one.

A detective named Capazone was talking to Yucker when they arrived and he had a Negro couple with him. The woman was short and stout and serious, the man lean, graying, and long-faced with a perpetually doleful expression.

Yucker introduced them and took Frank and Ernie aside. The couple, who were named Smith, lived in the building next to the shooting gallery, he explained, and were witnesses. The woman, Florabelle Smith, after several questionings, had finally admitted seeing the perpetrator throw the dead girl off the fire escape and her husband had confessed to making the anonymous call that started the investigation. "They've dictated statements," Yucker said, "and are waiting to sign them."

"Could she identify the perpetrator?" Grinold wanted to know.

Yucker shook his head. The woman, according to her story, had heard the earlier screams and had looked out her rear window but could see nothing. Nor did she do anything. She was alone in her apartment waiting for her husband to come home from work. He worked the three to eleven shift at a utility plant.

By the time he returned, at eleven-twenty, the screams had stopped and all was quiet so she said nothing. They went to bed about midnight, but Florabelle Smith couldn't get to sleep for thinking about it.

About one o'clock she heard sounds on the fire escape next door. She looked out her window in time to see a pale figure tumble over the railing, arms and legs flying, and crash into the yard below.

Since she was on the second floor and had to look through two fire escape landings to the far end of the next building, she couldn't see who had pitched the body over. She could only hear him moving around.

She waited, but no cry was raised. There was no stir of any kind. She would have thought she imagined it all except she could dimly make out the figure lying below.

She tried to ignore it, to let someone else take action. She went back to bed but she couldn't sleep. Finally, near four o'clock, she roused her husband, told him the story, pointed out the figure and got him to dress, go find a phone and call the police.

Sessions and Grinold talked to the couple themselves, asking Mrs. Smith to describe the scene for them exactly. Her recollection of the silent, falling body was vivid and supported the view that the girl was dead. But she could tell absolutely nothing about who or what else was up on that fire escape.

The statement solved the mystery of the anonymous phone call but it did nothing for the case itself. Nor did anything else that came in from Harlem. An informant friend of Detective Carney's called to say he hadn't picked up a whisper about the murder. There was a lot of talk but it was all speculative. He couldn't find anybody who even claimed to have inside information on the rapist or his methods. It was too quiet for Harlem. It was enough to make one believe the perpetrator really had fled town.

Something that sounded more like a break came in at two o'clock. It was a call from the Ninth Detective Squad with news that a precinct patrolman, showing pictures of the twenty-one sex-offenders around Washington Square had got an ID.

That was a lead Sessions and Grinold wanted to check in person and they drove down in Ernie's car. The road under the arch and around the fountain in Washington Square was closed to vehicular traffic so Grinold had plenty of room to drive in and park. The patrolman was on duty and walked over as the detectives got out. He was a tall, very slender man in early twenties with a young, interested face. His name, he told them, was Burleigh, but he was called "Sunny" by the hippies because he had a rapport with them. He let them do their thing and didn't give them a hard time so long as they behaved decently. He had

shown the mug shots around to all the ones he knew and a lad in one group thought he recognized one of the men.

"Where is he?" Frank asked him.

"Sitting on the grass over there." He waved at the trees and bushes that lined the walk behind him. "You want to wait here, I'll get him."

He went off and Sessions lighted a cigarette. The day was bright and mild but the park was not overly populated. NYU wasn't open yet and the real horde of hippies still hadn't reappeared after Chicago. Only a few foreign students wandered by and there was but a scattering of acidheads. One out-sized Negro with a bright headband, a ruglike tunic, a staff, a pair of dirty white shorts, was striding around moaning and singsonging and talking about God. Over by the fountain a couple of others experimented on a guitar. Along the side of the park, where construction was starting at Washington Square South and La Guardia Place, graffiti on the fence proposed such things as, "Sex before finals," and "God give America—love." There was poetry: "Roses are red, Violets are blue, Draft-dodgers we hate, But we'll fight for you too," philosophy: "The mills of the Gods grind slowly—and they grind woel" political views: "The state is an armed body of men whose sole purpose is to protect the interests of the ruling class," and "NYU is not a university, it is a capitalist adventure." And, miscellaneous: "We Love Our Country (and the almighty SDS)", "God Bless America—A.R.O.T.C. Forever", "Why are people being killed anywhere?" "Obscenity is a groove," and "Peace by piece."

The patrolman called "Sunny" came back saying they'd be along, and almost immediately five young people in their late teens appeared, three boys—one dark, one blond, one Negro—and two girls, a blonde and a brunette. Sunny said to them, "These are the detectives I was telling you about," and Sessions introduced himself and Grinold. The five introduced themselves too. The short dark youth said he was Tommy. The tall blond lad was Happy, the young Negro was Kidd, the blonde girl called herself Thorn and the other, Maria.

Sessions took out his prints of the sex-offenders and handed them around. "You say you recognize one of these men?"

Happy said, "What are they supposed to have done?"

"We don't know that they've done anything."

"Are these the same pictures Sunny gave us?"

"So far as I know."

Thorn only glanced at a couple of the pictures and gave them away. She said she couldn't identify anybody, she wasn't around that much.

"You don't live here?"

"I live in Scarsdale. Maria too. We're just in for the day." She smiled and latched hands with Kidd.

Sessions asked about the others. Tommy said, naw, he didn't live in town. He lived in Brooklyn. But he'd been in the last two days. Kidd said he was in and out. He wore an all-black costume and explained he was in a band so he went where the band went. Of the group, only Happy had residence in the area. Only Happy seriously studied the pictures.

Thorn bummed a cigarette from Frank and he lighted it. She said, "Why don't you come and join us? It's much nicer than working."

Frank smiled. "It beats going to school too, I guess."

She nodded wisely. "But I was dumb. I spent so much time down here last year I flunked all my subjects—except things like gym and home ec—and I have to repeat. But it's only till March. In March I turn eighteen."

"Then you can quit school?"

She shook her head. "Then I can leave home."

Happy, sorting through pictures, said, "Then you reach the age of consent," and they both laughed.

Tommy handed his pictures to Happy and said he gave up. He bummed a cigarette from Frank too and lighted it himself. He said, "Have you ever tripped, Detec?" and sounded very serious.

Frank said, just as seriously, that no, he hadn't. It wasn't his bag.

"It would help you," Tommy said. "You know—your mind gets—you start thinking these great ideas. You can't remember them after, but they're inside of you. They're there and when you trip, out they come. You didn't know you had them in you, except you do know, but you weren't aware until out they come. I was rapping my brother's girl for three hours one time. I mean she hardly said a word. I left her speechless with my ideas."

Happy said, "What you're saying, Tommy, is maybe they could solve their cases by expanding their minds."

"That's it. That's exactly what I mean." He went on to Frank. "You'll see things more clearly. You'll get ideas you'd never get otherwise."

Happy interrupted. He was holding up one of the pictures. "This," he said, and gave it to Frank. "This is the guy I've seen." It was the mug shot of Samuel Eustace Brown.

Frank showed it to Grinold and then to the others. "Have any of the rest of you seen this particular man around here?"

They shook their heads but Happy was confident. "They aren't around as much as I am. They don't remember. But I've seen him."

Frank asked him where but Happy wasn't so certain when it came to location. But it was probably around Washington Square for that's where he hung out most of the time and you got to recognize other people who came around even if you never spoke to them or had any dealings with them.

"But you're sure this is the man?"

Happy laughed. "Sure I'm sure. I'm not sure enough to swear to it in court, if that's what you're thinking, but I'm sure in my own mind, if you know what I mean."

Grinold said, "Do you remember when? Was it often?"

Happy shook his head at that. It wasn't that concrete. The face was familiar. He was sure he'd seen the man before, but that was as far as he'd go.

The detectives got Happy's real name and address and said they might want to see him again. Tommy said, "Come on back. We'll do our thing for you."

Happy said, "Provided you leave the gun and badge behind."

They parted, the kids heading back for the grass, the detectives to the car. Frank waved to the group as Grinold started off. He sat back and lighted a cigarette. "They seem like nice kids."

"Nice? Spending their lives lying around in the park? How the hell are they going to end up?"

"Probably like one guy said—living off of us."

CHAPTER XIV

Frank Sessions got up at half-past four on Wednesday morning but Marcia Page was up ahead of him and already dressed. "Coffee's on," she said, "but you really don't have to ride with me to the airport. I can get the limousine. I've been doing it for three years."

"But you'd like the company."

"I'd love the company. But I worry about you. You need sleep. You're going to waste away, Frank, and I like you healthy."

"Jesus, you sound like my doctor."

He dressed and they had the coffee together. When she locked up, he carried her overnight bag down in the elevator for her and hailed a cab. They held hands on the way to La Guardia and she snuggled against him. "I'm going to miss New York," she said.

He laughed. "Miss this town? It's a disaster area. It needs foreign aid."

"I meant I'm going to miss you."

"Like hell you will. A new town, a new life. You won't think of me until you get back."

"I'll think of you. I just hope I don't think of you too much. But let's not be morbid, girl. I don't think Frank Sessions likes morbidity. What are you going to do after I go, Frank?"

"First I'm going to my apartment and change."

"Don't be literal. I mean what else are you going to do besides maybe give an occasional thought to me?"

"Work. What do you think?"

"I thought you'd done just about everything there was to do."

"There're still things. The morticians are supposed to have fixed up the kid's face so she can have her picture taken. The pictures should be ready today and once we get them, hopefully we'll get an ID."

The pictures, which came in around eleven, were in full color and looked good. They showed the rich chestnut color of her hair and a reasonable resemblance to the paleness of her skin. Even some of her freckles were visible. But how much the pictures resembled the living girl was still a question.

Copies were sent out in number to the sixth and ninth precinct houses for all the patrolmen and detectives. Dozens more were sent to newspapers around the country, along with a dental chart and a complete description of the girl herself, the clothes she wore, and all her marks and scars—the mole on the left side of her hip, the larger one beneath her left shoulder blade, the small scar on her right shin, the faint discoloration beside her navel. It was upon such as this that identification hinged for her fingerprints were not on record.

Meanwhile, the usual inquiries came in to Missing Persons—the countrywide letters about disappearing relatives who were thought to be in the big city. There were the special inquiries too—the anxious parents who came to view the body and see if it were their vanished daughter. But none of the letters described the dead girl and none of the viewers claimed her. She remained in the medical examiner's building, an anonymous corpse without a past, without a future who, unless somebody could be found to change matters, would ultimately be interred in New York's potter's field, unloved, unwept for and unattended.

Frank Sessions, in an effort to alter that future, spent most of Wednesday and part of Thursday showing the girl's picture around the East Village-Greenwich Village area, hitting subway kiosks, shops, lunch counters, and every other place he could think of that the girl, if she had made the scene in that part of town might have gone. He tracked down Happy, showed it to

him and had him show it to his friends. Unlike the picture of Sam Brown, it rang no bells.

On Friday, acting on a tip, he and Grinold cornered Colin Bradford, Negro male, age 36, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 208, one of the five missing sex-offenders, who had sneaked back into town to his mother's place. They questioned him and got his alibi for the murder time. It wasn't a pretty story—having to do with procuring—but it did clear him of the crime and it did check out.

Friday's legwork also cleared three other sex-offenders and produced no new suspects. That night, after two days of celibacy, Frank stayed with a buxom girl named Liz who slung hash in an all night beanery the other six nights. She wasn't as pretty as the pouty Sheila, but she was more comfortable and Frank had a need for comfort.

Over the weekend he dragged the super down to look at mug shots. The super shook his head at them all. Frank and Grinold also located two more junkies the super had named but they knew nothing.

On Sunday, Frank filled out his seven-day form reporting on the progress of the case. He did not say they were at their wits' end, but he did admit No Progress.

On Monday, Frank was desperate enough to try a far-out idea. He bought the latest editions of the available underground hippie newspapers, *The east village Other*, the *Rat*, and a couple of the out-of-town publications like *The Chicago Seed*, and the Los Angeles *Open City*. Then he went through the classifieds. He ignored the get-together ads: "MALE 29 urgently needs 1 or 2 white, young and very passionate females to share nice west midtown apt. Call . . ."; "ATTRACTIVE young couple wish to meet attractive girl (18-25) for mutual sensual pleasures. Phone, photo, please. P.O. Box . . ."; "MAN, young, lean, good looking, masculine appearance, but passive nature, would like to meet masculine, active, aggressive, dominant men. Not S-M. Call . . ."; "YOUNG Man Good looking, Seeks attractive females or boy and girl 14 yrs. to 25 yrs. for polaroid pics and sex of your liking, orally talented, everything goes. Call . . .";

Sessions was interested in another type. They were few, but they were there: "M.E.R. II—We love you. Things can work out. Everything in S.A. is okey. Everyone and everything waiting for you. Your new white V.W. too. Please, please call home collect. LOVE FOREVER AND ETERNITY . . ."; "SARAH: PLEASE CALL ME OR SANDY LOVE, SAVY"; "SHERRIE Please Come Home. We all miss you. No punishment. That's a promise. At least call MOM, DAD, OR call Joel at . . .".

There were only a scattering of them but where there was a phone or an address, Frank called or wrote. And, back at the shop of Tony Penza, the balding hippie who had set himself up as a go-between, Frank checked out all the inquiries to see if the dead girl's parents had sought to reach her that way.

After that there was nothing more to do and no further reason to stay off the chart. On Tuesday, September 10, at quarter of eight, he showed up at Homicide headquarters to stand his regular duty.

CHAPTER XV

At five minutes of one the phone rang and he picked it up. "Homicide. Manhattan North. Sessions."

"Frank? Lieutenant Yucker."

Sessions, who was alone in the squad room typing out a DD5 report, laid his cigarette in a metal ashtray and said, "Yeah, Lieu?"

"We just got a call from one of our informants."

Lieutenant Yucker, in referring to a man who passed information to the police, did not call him by such unflattering terms as "stool pigeon," "stoolie," or even "informer." None of the detectives did, for these people made life livable. Without informants, a squad detective was as good as dead. With just a few of them, a detective could look like a genius. (And it was worth paying them out of one's own pocket for that kind of a reputation.)

"Sam Brown," Yucker finished, "is back in town."

"Sam Brown?" Frank said with interest.

"The guy you got the ID on down in the Village."

"The *possible* ID, Lieu. I wouldn't want to put Happy on a witness stand."

"Possible ID, then, and a possible suspect."

"The only possible suspect we've got." Frank pulled over a pad. "Where is he?"

"You know where his sister lives? Sister and her kid?"

"Yeah. I've been there."

"He was seen entering her building at twenty after twelve."

That's thirty-five minutes ago. We asked the informant to keep us posted if he departs again. So far as we know, he's still there."

"We'll go talk to him. Where's Ernie?"

Yucker laughed. "Ernie's got a burglary, an assault case, and a petty larceny he's working on. I don't know where he is right now. I can try to reach him—"

"The hell with it. That'd take too long. I'll go alone."

"You got somebody who can go with you?"

"They just went out to eat. But that's all right—"

"You better wait for them. Brown could be trouble. You ought to have a partner."

"And have him get away while I'm waiting? It's only a routine questioning, Lieu—so far, anyway. I can handle it."

He put the phone down, finished the last two sentences of his report, drained his mug of coffee and snuffed out his cigarette. He put the DD5 in his locker, went around to the desk and told Charlie Collins on the Boro desk where he was going. "And if I'm not back in an hour, send the marines."

Collins noted it on his pad. "You get a break?"

Frank shook his head. "Call it a tip. In this case I'm not expecting breaks."

The sex-offender named Samuel Eustace Brown, Negro male, twenty-four years of age, height six feet two inches, weight two hundred and fifteen pounds, lived with his sister, Lurline, and her son Keith, in a five story tenement building almost identical to, and three blocks from, the one in which the girl had been killed. The buildings in both places had the same sense of decay about them. There was much the same exterior design and interior plan. The area had been produced by the mile early in the century to provide upper-class housing for the well-to-do, and so it had until it deteriorated enough to drive the upper-class to other parts of the city or to the suburbs and open the way for lower-class housing which, by now, in this section, meant Negroes.

The apartment was on the fourth floor and consisted of three small rooms with a toilet and basin off the entry hall. Frank

knocked on the loose panels of the door at quarter past one and got out the leather case that held his shield.

It was Lurline who opened up. She was five and a half feet tall and stocky, with medium brown skin and knowing eyes. "Yeah?" she said and stopped. She hadn't been guessing who was at the door but she certainly hadn't been expecting a cop. She took a look at Frank and the shield and held still. Frank said, "I want to talk to Sam."

"He ain't here," she said, still without moving.

"He's here and I know he's here. Tell him I want to talk to him."

"He don't want to talk to you."

"Let him tell me that himself."

"I'm telling you."

Frank let his lip curl. "What's the matter? Your brother yellow? He's got to hide behind a woman's skirts? He doesn't have enough guts to talk for himself?"

There was a snarl from around the corner and two big hands seized the woman and thrust her aside. The hands belonged to Sam Brown and he looked even bigger than his recorded measurements made him sound. He'd cut his hair short too, which gave him a harder, uglier look than his long-haired mug shot and there was a dangerous heedlessness in the way he removed his sister to get at the detective. He came to the doorway with vicious movements and a vicious voice. The language he used and the names he called Frank were standard for the area but there was real meanness in the tone.

Frank didn't back off. He braced his feet and the timbre of his own voice cut harder than Sam's. "Hold it!" he said with a sharpness that threw the other man off stride. Then he gave it to him. "You listen to me, you son of a bitch. I came up here to talk to you. Do you talk or do you turn chicken?"

Brown doubled up his fist. "I'll show you what I'm going to do to you."

Frank pointed one finger. "I'm going to tell you something else. If you so much as touch me—and I mean just once *touch* me—

I'm going to take you downtown in irons. Do you read me, pal?"

The big Negro stopped where he was for he did read him. He read him very well. It wasn't the words. It was Frank's eyes and his voice. Sam Brown had seen cops all his life and they were no unknown quantity to him. He well knew that trained, disciplined police officers meant exactly what they said. He knew as surely as the sun would rise that if he so much as brushed a hand against this detective, the detective would drag him down to the police station in handcuffs. And Brown knew with equal certainty that he'd have to kill the detective to stop him. Nothing less would do. And since he wasn't prepared to kill a cop this afternoon, he held back. Instead of striking the detective, he launched into a torrent of abuse, the gist of it being that the detective was a yellow-livered coward who went to bed with his mother, and the only thing that made him tough was his gun. Take the gun away from the cop and his guts would turn to water and spill all over the floor. If the yellow-bastard, motherfucking cop wasn't wearing that gun, he—Sam Eustace Brown—would break him in two with one hand, would kick his guts out, and throw him and his guts down three flights of stairs to the street.

Sessions waited until the man drew a breath and then said, "Is that what you did to that little girl?"

Brown blinked and stopped in shock. "What?"

"You beat up on girls, Sam? Is that how you get your kicks?"

Brown recovered and for a moment Frank thought he *would* come for him. The big man's hamlike fists were tight and he was coiled like a spring, ready to let go. And if he had, it would have been a bad day for Frank Sessions.

But the Negro just held himself in check and, instead, turned loose his energy and his violence in another round of abuse.

This time Frank didn't let it go on so long. "Shut up," he snapped. "I didn't come up here to listen to your mouth. I came here to get some answers to some questions. Where the hell have you been?"

The anger and the stalling tactics were beginning to wear thin and the Negro's skin was developing an ashen hue under its rich,

chocolaty brown. "I ain't answering no questions," he shouted, but his following epithets lacked authority.

"Where were you and don't tell me any lies."

"I'll tell you all the goddam lies I want. I was out of town, just like my sister told you."

"Where out of town?"

"None of your goddam business. I don't have to answer no questions without a lawyer."

"You think you need a lawyer? You think you're being charged with something?"

"I don't need a goddam thing. I was outta town. I was out on business."

"What business?"

"Seeing a guy."

"What's his name?"

"What do you mean? What do you want to know that for? It's none of your goddam business."

"You didn't go out of town to see anybody. You were taking it on the lam. Why?"

"You can't accuse me of anything, you—" and he lapsed into another stream of obscenities.

Sessions said, "You talk like that one more time to me and I'll run you in. You get me?"

"What for?"

"Abusive language. Vilifying a police officer. Now, do you want to answer questions here or do you want to go down to the station house and answer them?"

"Listen, I ain't done nothing. I swear it."

"Where'd you go out of town?"

"To see a guy."

"Don't tell me that unless you tell me his name."

"It's, it's Joe Green."

"What's his address?"

Brown stopped on that one. Then he said, "Listen, I don't have to answer any questions. I ain't done nothing."

"What time, Sunday, did you go out of town?"

He blanched a little. He said, "I don't know what you're talking about. I didn't go out of town Sunday. I went before Sunday."

"What day?"

"Saturday. I went out of town Saturday. Ain't that right, Lurline?" He turned to the sister who had claimed it was Thursday. She said, "Yeah. That's right."

"Where'd you go?"

Lurline said, "I told you where he went. I told you—"

"Let the kid answer."

She didn't let him answer. "Pittsburgh," she said. "Remember, Sam? You were going to see a guy about a job."

"Yeah," Sam said with a little more confidence. "Only the job didn't pan out so I come back. Right, Lurline?"

"Yeah, that's right." She turned to Sessions. "So what do you think about that, Fuzz? I guess there ain't no law against my brother going to Pittsburgh to see about a job is there?"

Sam said, "Yeah, I guess I can do like I want and no copper can tell me what's what. This is a free country. I don't have to talk to you for nothing."

With Lurline's help, Sam was regaining his balance. Against the two of them Frank couldn't maintain the initiative. The moment for breaking Sam down was past for now and Frank let it go. There'd be a future occasion if the evidence warranted. In the meantime, let Sam have his victory. Let him think he was safe.

"That's right," Frank said to the man. "You don't have to talk to me for nothing. Just so long as you keep your nose clean, you don't have to worry about a thing."

"And that's the way it is, copper," Sam sneered. "I ain't worried a bit."

CHAPTER XVI

Sessions, returning to homicide, found a copy of the latest DETECTIVES ENDOWMENT ASSOCIATION BULLETIN stuck in his small locker with a note from Ken Grannis on the back circling one of the items and saying, "And you wonder why detectives don't detect!" The item was entitled: "PAPERWORK" and read:

Efforts are being made to cut down on the paper work with the stamp etc., however, for the record and to give an idea of the ridiculous, discouraging, nonsensical situation involving the arrest of a 17 year old for NARCOTICS, the following have to be completed:

1 UF61 Complaint Report, 1 Blue Arrest Card for Desk Officer, 1 Blue Arrest Card for File, 1 Blue Arrest Card for Narcotics Bureau plus 2 DD-30's, 1 Blue Arrest Card for Youth Division plus 1 YD-1, 1 Blue Arrest Card for State Narcotics Control, 1 Blue Arrest Card for Complaint Room on Affidavit, 5 White Arrest Cards, 2 Pedigree Forms, 3 Fingerprint Forms and 1 DD-25 Index Form, 2 Police Laboratory Reports and 1 Property Clerk 9, 1 Rights Form, 5 State Narcotics Forms, 2 Correction Forms, 1 Voucher, 1 Arrangement Card, 1 Docket Number Form, 2 DD-52-A Cards and 1 Arrest Disposition DD5.

After these are completed on some broken down typewriter, if you are lucky enough to find one not being used, you are faced with the impossible courts, and other obstacles placed in your path to discourage you. However, we will continue to fight to improve

your lot and request that you forward to the Association summaries of other stupid situations which we will publish.

Sessions grinned and took it in to show Nick Celotto, typing up reports of a stabbing the night before. Nick, a husky, soft-spoken Italian with dark curly hair and a scarred lip, was the only homicide detective around. He smiled at the item and said, "Yeah, I saw it. I can think of a few additions too."

"Like district attorneys who insist on taking prisoners' statements on your time off—"

"And the days you spend in court while a case is being tried."

Frank said, "It's easier to let the guy go." He lighted a cigarette and looked over Nick's shoulder. "You wrapping it up?"

"Unless the victim dies."

"What are his chances?"

"He's supposed to pull through . . . 75-25 the doc says. How'd you make out? Charlie says one of your suspects came back to town."

"Yeah, a big, strong son-of-a-bitch. He wanted to throw me down the stairs. You know, he's strong enough and solid enough. He could have busted up that girl, Nick. Hell, I think he could have busted me up." Sessions laughed. "You know, at one point I really thought he was going to try it. I leaned on him hard."

"You think he did it?"


"He's a goddamned liar and his sister's covering up for him. And he gets white around the gills every time I mention beating up on a girl. That doesn't make him the perpetrator, but it sure as hell makes me want to give him a thorough check. Especially when he's just the kind of wild man who goes ape when things don't work out his way."

"He give you a bad time?"

"Not really, though there was a moment or two when I thought he'd have behaved better if I'd brought another detective along. He was too big for me to scare him."

"Did he scare *you*?"

Frank blinked. "What?"



"Did he scare you? Were you, at any time, scared?"

"Jesus, what the hell kind of a question is that?"

"I'm curious."

"How the hell would I know? I wasn't thinking about anything like that."

"It's like crying, right, Frank?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Could you cry? Could you get hurt enough to cry?"

"I could groan up a storm if things got bad enough. But if you mean the waterworks—the whole bit, hell no. I've forgotten how."

Nick nodded sagely. "That's right. And you weren't scared for the same reason. You've forgotten how to be scared. You've been conditioned to the point where you don't know what fear is any more."

"Nick the philosopher. Jesus, what kind of a kick are you on?"

"I've been thinking about the difference between us and the next guy. Take my nephew, for instance. I've got this kid nephew. He's maybe twenty-three and he's big. He's got thirty pounds on me. He's a football player in fact—plays on one of the Giant farm teams. And he was quizzing me about that. You know—what you did—walking into a hostile situation where you're outnumbered and outgunned. He says how can I walk up to a couple of suspects and start questioning them, for example. He'd be scared to death."

Frank said, "I'll bet you've got a real hot answer to that one."

"I said it's because I know exactly what I'm prepared to do. That's the difference. He wouldn't know in advance how he'd react to whatever moves they made. I do and you do and the rest of us do because we've been trained. That's what I mean about conditioning."

Frank said, "Jesus, what a line. I'll bet the kid buys it, too."

"Of course he does. It's the truth."

The phone rang and he picked it up. It was Peter Quent wanting Frank and Nick asked him if they had anything on the girl yet, then handed over the phone.

Frank laid his cigarette in the tray. "Yeah, Pete?"

"I was just talking to Jack Hewlett, Frank. They still don't have anything on this girl. The endeavoring brought in a few nibbles but they're false alarms. The publicity the same way. And the regular inquiries that Missing Persons handles don't come close to fitting her description."

"Yeah, so I gather."

"Jack figures if she was going to be reported missing, she'd be reported by now."

"That's what I think."

"What have you got? You chasing any hot leads?"

Sessions snorted. "What I've got is one possible guy who hasn't been definitely cleared. I just saw him, in fact. We haven't got anything on him, but there's the barest chance he might be it. I'm going to talk to his friends and look into his habits, but I'm not really expecting to turn up anything."

"And that's all?"

"That's all there is right now."

"Then, are you through with the girl?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"The powers that be are starting to ask me how long we're going to need her. They can't keep her forever and they want some idea as to when we'll be ready to release her."

"Release her? There's nobody to release her to."

"They mean for burial."

"You mean throw her in the city cemetery—in with the Bowery bums and the derelicts?"

"That's not what *I* mean. That's what *they* mean."

"Screw that. Tell them we're not through. Tell them we're still trying to find her next of kin."

"They know you are. They want to know when you're going to give up."

"It's not yet. You can tell them that. Tell them we still need her for viewings."

"O.K., I just wanted to check."

"What the hell are they so anxious for? She's embalmed and refrigerated. She ought to keep damned near forever."

"They aren't pressuring, Frank. Not yet, anyway. They're just asking."

"Let them ask. What the hell, it's not crowded over there. Those M.E.'s have got over a hundred damned bins. What do they want, rent?"

"They don't care, Frank. It's the health officer. They say if he comes around he's going to say, 'Get her out of here.' They've got it pretty well figured, what with all the publicity and nobody claiming her, that it's going to be like that little girl in the nineteen forty-four Hartford circus fire who nobody ever claimed. Little Miss Fifteen-sixty-five or whatever her number was."

"Publicity? What publicity? Hell, you miss one issue of the paper and there goes all your publicity. Or she comes from the mid-west somewhere and the publicity never hits the papers. Or her folks think she's in boarding school in Ashtabula or she's blowing her mind in Haight-Ashbury and they don't read stories about New York homicides. We're not giving up on her by a damned sight. I'll get Farquhar to back me up on that. I'll get Chief Moran. He'll support me."

"O.K., Frank. Like I say, they're just asking the question. And I thought you'd better know. Because, in another week, you can figure they'll be pressuring."

CHAPTER XVII

Six days later, on Monday the sixteenth of September, Marcia Page got back to town. Frank didn't meet her at the airport which, after all, would be expecting too much. Nor did he send her flowers. But he did leave a phone number and he was at that number when she called. Though she might not know it, that was extraordinary for Frank.

He picked her up for dinner at an appropriate hour and she was so prompt he didn't get to go up to her apartment and meet her roommate, a fact he noted without comment.

In the cab she asked about his week and he told her there was little to report. He'd caught a vehicular homicide Thursday night—hit and run on Broadway. They'd arrested the man on Friday, he'd confessed, first to the detectives and then to the assistant district attorney, and it was all wrapped up by midnight.

Marcia said, "I mean, what about the young girl? What's happened with her?"

"They're starting to get on us again, down at the M.E.'s office, about burying her—throwing her in with the derelicts and the bums."

"Why with them?"

"Where else would they put her? The city's stuck with her and the city isn't going to spend the taxpayer's money on hearts and flowers and a mausoleum. They're going to dig a hole and throw her in."

"That poor girl."

"Yeah, except the time for tears for her ended when she went over that railing."

"Yes, I suppose—" Marcia shivered. "But what about the person who killed her? Are you making any progress there?"

Frank shook his head. "We had a suspect last week. I suppose, technically, he's still a suspect. We haven't cleared him. But we don't have anything on him."

"How come? I mean, what happened?"

Frank told her about Sam Brown. "I talked to a guy. He'd served time for rape two years ago. He attacked a woman and her teen-age daughter in an east side apartment. He's a mean bastard and he's physically and mentally capable of doing what was done to the girl. He has no alibi for the murder night and he left town for ten days right about the time she died—because of trouble that he won't talk about."

"He sounds like the one, Frank. Leaving town and all? It's too coincidental."

Sessions laughed. "What's coincidental about it? There must be a thousand guys in Harlem who committed a crime that night, can't alibi themselves, and would flee town if the heat got turned on. It's easy enough to figure this particular man did something wrong that night and left town because of it, but it doesn't necessarily follow that what he did was kill that girl."

"You don't think he did?"

"I don't know what he did. I talked to him and decided there was enough there to warrant further investigation. We showed his picture to everybody in the murder building and nobody had seen him. We questioned people in his neighborhood to find out what they knew about him. What we learned is that he's a loner, that he's bad news. He's ugly and unstable and can turn on you in a flash. People steer clear of him. He doesn't confide in anybody and he doesn't have any friends. He's had a few jobs—heavy work, like moving furniture, but they don't last long. He gets into a fight with the other men or he slugs the boss. He's had three felony arrests and one conviction, besides the rape. He lives off his sister's welfare allowance."

Marcia said, "He doesn't sound very appetizing."

"That's right. He's a bum. But that doesn't make him a murderer. There isn't one single thing we've found out about him that connects him with the dead girl. Even the fact he's been seen around Washington Square doesn't help us for we don't have any evidence that the girl was ever there. So, while we can't prove he *couldn't* have killed her, we've got no reason to think he did. There must be a thousand other guys around those parts who are just as possible."

"But you don't know who they are?"

"That's right, we don't." He squeezed her hand and patted it. "And now let's stop talking about it and enjoy the evening."

They did stop and neither the girl nor the case were mentioned again through the dinner or through the time they spent back in Frank's apartment. In fact, when Marcia dozed off in Frank's bed, her mind was on far different things.

Then the television in the next room awoke her and she found herself in an empty bed in a darkened room with just a crack of light showing through the partly opened door.

She turned on the lamp to read the clock and then, because she didn't have any clothes on, she got into a dressing gown of Frank's she found in the closet. She lighted a cigarette next, also one of Frank's, then, out of curiosity, poked through his dresser drawers quickly. Not that it really mattered, but she wondered if one of them might contain a cache of female garments—sheer nylon nightgowns in various sizes and colors, peignoirs, something like that—the kind of thing one might keep on hand to equip young ladies with should they, on the spur of the moment, decide to spend the night.

There were no such things in any of Frank's drawers. Nor did the bathroom contain bath oil, powder, shower caps or anything else female. Nothing there or anywhere else in Frank Sessions' apartment indicated any woman had ever crossed the threshold.

She smiled at herself and opened the door. Frank was sitting on the daybed with his back to her, smoking cigarettes, sipping

from a can of beer, and watching the TV. He turned when she came out and gave her a fond grin. "You slept."

"It's a good thing I woke up. If I stayed out all night, I'm sure my roommate would start leering at me."

"Two to one says she's out when you get in. You want to go now?"

"There's no particular hurry. I have to dress anyway." She nodded at the television. "What's the movie?"

"I don't know."

She laughed. "What's it about?"

He shook his head. "I haven't been watching it."

"You've got it on, you're facing it, but you're not watching it?"

"I've been thinking."

"Not about me. I can tell that from your expression."

He acknowledged her perception. "I've been thinking about the case again—the young girl."

"I thought you said there was nothing more to do about it."

"There isn't, unless somebody decides to talk, and that's not likely now. But you get used to cases like that—that you can't solve. What's bugging me is that we can't find out who she is. It's the talk about burying her. It's got me wondering why the hell she hasn't been reported, why we can't get a make on her."

"Does it matter, really, if you don't know who killed her?"

"It would get her a decent burial." He shrugged and stared at the television. "If that's worth anything." He took a drag on his cigarette and scowled. "More than that, though, I have a feeling we could get a lead to the perpetrator if we could identify the victim." He sat back, rubbed out his butt in the ashtray and said, "So why the hell isn't she missed?"

Marcia smiled down at him. "She's an orphan," she said. "Or she's older than she looks and had already left home. She was living with a man and he threw her out. Or, let's see. Her folks are in Europe and her governess is terrified at her running away and has run away herself."

Frank smiled. "Go on."

"Surely I'm not suggesting anything that's worth anything, or that you haven't already thought of?"

"The governess one is a new thought."

"But you don't seriously consider it."

"I don't think that's the answer, no, but go ahead and talk anyway." He started to get up. "Would you like a drink?"

"No, no. I'll just sit here."

They got comfortable and he said, "Go on. Tell me some more."

"But why, Frank? I'm not a detective."

"No, but you have ideas."

"Why should you be interested in my ideas?"

"Why shouldn't I be?" Frank lighted another cigarette. "If I introduced you to my partner—one of my partners—Ray Ecklin, and if you expressed much interest in the detective business, the chances are he'd tell you about a big case he had—a woman dietitian, in town for a convention, who was strangled in her hotel room. He would tell you how they tracked down a logical suspect and were almost ready to make an arrest when they discovered he had an unbreakable alibi. He was in Florida at a time that made it impossible for him to catch a plane to New York before the murder. And that was the case. They've never found another lead. They have no idea who committed the crime, nor why."

"But he wouldn't tell you this story in a bid for sympathy. He'd tell it in hopes you might come forth with a suggestion or an idea he never thought of. The chance would be slim, but the chance would be there. So he'd want to pick your brains—or anybody's brains."

"And that's what I'm doing. I'm looking for new ideas—because mine don't do me any good."

"Why?"

"Because I see it this way. I figure the most probable reason the girl hasn't been reported missing is because whoever would do the reporting either doesn't know she's missing—which isn't too likely—or doesn't know she came to New York. By not coming to New York, I mean the girl is known to be missing but is believed

to be missing locally. Her folks think she's lost in the woods or got attacked by a sex fiend and is buried in those same woods. So all the hunting has been done around her home and nobody connects her with a kid being killed in a Harlem tenement.

"But if that's the way it is, I'm never going to get an identification on the girl because they'll never look for her here. So my only hope is that I'm wrong, that there's a totally different reason for her not being reported. Therefore, I want to listen to other ideas and keep my fingers crossed that one of them turns out not only to be right, but also gives me a clue to her identity at the same time. That's why I want to hear from you."

She smiled. "I'm amazed. I never knew detectives would ask laymen for ideas."

"Why the hell not? Who's going to be proud when it comes to solving a homicide? Jesus, do you think I care who nails this rape-killer just so long as *somebody* nails him?"

She said, "Well, I feel important. But really, Frank, I've about run out of ideas. Maybe she lived with her old mother and her mother died and she left her there and took the family savings and came to New York."

Frank laughed. "Or maybe she killed her old mother and took the family savings and came to New York."

"You would think that way—a sweet young kid like her!"

"She's young. That doesn't mean she's sweet. All right, let's try something else. If she comes to New York from some place outside of New York—which is the conclusion we've been accepting—how did she get here? Car, train, bus, or plane? I showed her picture all around Grand Central, Penn Station, the Port Authority Building, Kennedy, La Guardia and Newark Airports. No response. I didn't think there would be, but it's better than watching television. But that doesn't mean for one second that she didn't come in through one of those places."

"I suppose train or bus is the most likely."

"They're the cheapest and I wouldn't guess, from her clothes, that she'd be well-heeled. Of course, if money was short, she might have hitch-hiked."

"Do you think she's the type?"

"What I think doesn't matter. What counts is what's possible. In fact, what counts is not just what's possible, but what we can check on. If she came in by plane, train or bus, for instance, we can't find it out because I've tried." He shrugged. "Now if she came in by car, what are the possibilities?"

"She drove or she hitch-hiked."

"Or she was driven." Frank scowled and pondered. "Either she came alone or she came with one or more other people. If she came alone, finding out who she is wouldn't help us much for it wouldn't tell us what happened to her. We need her with friends for fellow witnesses. If she came to New York alone and by car, she probably hitched. Even if she had a license, she wouldn't be driving the family buggy. She'd have to steal a car, and that's not likely. So if she's a lone runaway coming by car, she probably hitched. Then the only person who could help us would be the one who gave her the ride. And how could we find him?"

"I don't know," Marcia said. "That would sound impossible to me."

"It would have to be from publicity. The driver sees it and comes to us. But there's been publicity—as much of it as we could get—and it hasn't brought us anything."

"Maybe she rode in with friends."

"That's our biggest hope. Because they'd presumably know what happened to her. But how come we haven't heard from them?"

"Maybe her friends were responsible. Maybe she came in with a bunch of friends—or people she *thought* were friends—and they lured her here in order to do what they did."

Frank smiled. "Now you're thinking. That's a good thought. It might not be the way it happened, but it's different from the way I've been thinking."

"But if so, they aren't going to talk either."

"And if the friends drove her, or she hitched a ride, we're at the mercy of those people to tell us about it. There's no way we can go after them."

Marcia said, "I don't suppose anybody at the toll booths could tell if a certain car came through?"

"Not unless they're on the lookout for it. You have a stolen car and they might pick it up." He shrugged. "I suppose that's an angle we haven't covered."

"What? Stolen cars?"

"That's right. We haven't checked out stolen car reports to see what was picked up in Manhattan around that time. I suppose that's worth a try."

"Just on the off chance that she or the people she came with stole a car?"

"Or the equally off chance that the car they came in got stolen, and they reported it. Plus the equally remote possibility that the police recovered it in town."

"That sounds pretty far out."

"It's like showing her picture to red caps in Grand Central. You aren't expecting to get anywhere, but you try to touch all bases."

CHAPTER XVIII

Charlie Collins was first with the news Tuesday morning. He was on the phone at the front desk at nine o'clock when Frank Sessions came in and he gave him a big grin. "Congratulations," he said, putting a momentary hand over the mouthpiece. "I hear your girlfriend's fixed up."

Frank shrugged and went into the Homicide room opposite the office. The alarms file, a two-holed set of covers and posts capable of holding some 500 to 750 sheets of alarms, was on the table and he flipped through it quickly. Though it was nearly full, the alarms it contained still didn't go back to the first of the month. The previous set of alarms, reaching into August, had been tied in a bundle and thrown into the cardboard carton under the table and if Frank wanted to see any of those, he'd have to dig for them.

It didn't matter for he was only idly curious. He wasn't going to rely on the alarms file for stolen car information. For real help he would call the National Auto Theft Bureau, the organization that acted as underwriters for the auto insurance companies. In its files were the records of all reported stolen cars and all reported recoveries throughout the country.

Bart Mannion, a six-four, sandy-haired member of the squad, looked in and grinned. "Hey, Frank," he said. "That's some news, huh?"

Frank flipped the alarms file shut. "What is?"

"About your girlfriend. The one in Harlem."

"You mean my case? What about her?"

"She's not going into potter's field."

"Who says so?"

"I don't know, but that's what I hear."

Frank crossed to the homicide office where Ronnie Romero was still hanging around talking to Bill Cantrell and Alfredo Rodriguez before going off night duty. "What the hell's Bart talking about—my kid getting a decent burial?"

Ronnie laughed. "You haven't heard? I thought every detective in the bureau knew it by now. We got it yesterday afternoon. Captain Moroney's got a brother who's a monsignor. So he mentioned it to the monsignor—about the girl being unclaimed—and the monsignor arranged for a plot in a Catholic cemetery for her."

Rodriguez said, "That's pretty nice of the monsignor, no?"

Frank said, "It's nice of Moroney too."

"Murtry says the monsignor's even going to conduct the service."

Ronnie didn't think that was so, but there would be a service. "And if I'm off duty, I'll go to it."

Cantrell said he would too. "When's it going to be, Frank? You ready to let the girl go now?"

Frank sat on the desk beside Romero and dialed the phone. "Soon," he said. "Another couple of days."

"You going to her funeral too?"

"I'll be there." Into the phone he said, "Operator, would you get me the number of the National Auto Theft Bureau?" and pulled out his pad.

It was just ten after nine when Frank put his call through to the Auto Theft Bureau. What he was after, he said, were the names and addresses of the owners of all out-of-city stolen cars recovered on Manhattan Island during the month of August.

The answer came back before noon and the number was nineteen. If the figure seemed small, it was because the overwhelming majority of recovered cars were from New York City itself. Cars stolen elsewhere had their license numbers sent to the State Police as a matter of course but, unless the car was thought to have

been taken to New York City, its number would not be on the list the city police were to read and heed before going out on patrol each day. In normal circumstances, the only way a New York City patrolman would pick up an out-of-city stolen car would be if he stopped the driver for a traffic violation or the car had been left in the same parking spot for enough days for the policeman to wonder about it.

Only nineteen out-of-city cars, therefore, had been recovered in the city proper during the month of August, starting with a Groton, Connecticut car on August third and ending with a Fairchild, Pennsylvania car on August thirty-first. For Frank, the next move was routine. A teletype message was dispatched to the authorities in each of the nineteen towns saying: REQUEST INFO ANY FEMALES REPORTED MISSING UR AREA MONTH OF AUGUST.

It was a very long shot, but should any of the towns reply in the affirmative, he'd shoot a fast wire back asking for photographs and particulars.

He did not get any affirmatives, however. Ten towns replied in the negative before the day was out. The other nine replies came in the following day and only one of them was less than a flat no. The exception was a wire from a Sheriff Courtney Clock of Rutland County, Pennsylvania, sent via the State Police teletype, which said, RE MISSING FEMALES DO U MEAN REPORTED MISSING OR REALLY MISSING?

It was the only result Frank could follow up and he called the county sheriff person-to-person at his home in Newberry Center as soon as he got the wire. It was pushing five o'clock and the night men were with him, quaffing beer from a sixpack Lenny Green had brought in.

Sessions, behind the desk, was sipping and smoking when the sheriff, wonder in his voice, said yeah, he was Courtney Clock and he'd take a call from New York. "Yeah," he said and listened and said, "You're who? What's that again?"

"I'm Detective Sessions. Detective Frank Sessions, of the Homicide Squad, Manhattan North, in New York City. I believe you got—"

"New York City?"

"You've heard of it?"

"You're a city detective, huh? New York City?"

"That's right, Sheriff. The Homicide Squad." He gestured helplessly to the others. "I sent you a wire. Remember?"

"Homicide Squad? Is that what you said?"

"That's right. Homicide Squad."

"You mean you got a whole squad of detectives in New York City just for homicides?"

"That's right, Sheriff."

"Well I'll be damned."

"I sent you a wire, Sheriff. About missing females in your district. Remember?"

"Yeah. So you're the man who sent the wire? Homicide, eh? And you don't do anything else except work on homicides? Nothing else?"

"That's right, Sheriff. And I'm working on one right now that maybe you can help me with. Do you know of any girls missing in your district?"

"Nope. Nary a one."

"Sheriff, in your message you asked if I meant girls reported missing or actually missing. Isn't that right?"

"That's right."

"But you don't have anybody missing?"

"That's right."

"Then what were you asking the question for?"

"Wal, your wire said you wanted to know about females *reported* missing. There's a difference between being reported missing and being actually missing."

Frank made a face at the others. He took a big swallow of beer. "All right, Sheriff, have any girls in your area been reported missing?"

"Yes. Now *that* I can say yes to. There was a report a while back. Two girls as I recollect."

"And what happened?"

"They showed up again."

"Showed up or were found?"

"I don't know. What's the difference?"

"How old were the girls, Sheriff, and when were they reported and when were they found?"

"I don't know. I'd have to look it up."

"Would you do that?"

"I can't right now. I gotta go milk the cows."

"Sheriff, I'm calling from New York. We're trying to backtrack on a girl we found here. We want to find out if she came from your area—"

"Yeah, well I can appreciate that, but like I say, I got to go milk the cows. You want to call back around seven o'clock, maybe I can find out for you."

"Look, Sheriff, it'll only—" Frank stopped and stared at the receiver. Then he stared at the others. "The son-of-a-bitch hung up!"

CHAPTER XIX

At seven o'clock Sessions put through another call and got the sheriff again, this time at dessert.

"You sure are prompt," Sheriff Clock said. "In fact, you're a couple of minutes early and I still got a couple of bites of pie left."

Frank stared at the ceiling for a moment. "Jesus, Sheriff, I sure am sorry. Can you eat your pie while we're talking?"

"That's what I'm doing, Mr.—Sessions did you say your name is? But you're going to have to listen to me chew."

"I'll be glad to, so long as the cows got milked."

"You ain't a farmer, mister. Cows can't wait. Men can. Even New York detectives." He chuckled. "I told my wife and she can't believe it neither. A whole squad of detectives and they don't do nothing at all except solve killings! How many men you got in that squad?"

"Twenty-four detectives, three sergeants and a lieutenant. Twenty-eight people."

"Twenty-eight people? And you get enough killings in New York to keep twenty-eight people busy?"

The population of Newberry Center, Frank had found, was 2079 according to the 1960 census and that many people wouldn't fill up a block of Harlem tenements. No wonder it staggered Sheriff Clock's imagination picturing twenty-eight detectives devoting themselves exclusively to murder. Frank didn't even try to tell him that those twenty-eight men worked overtime just han-

dling the murders in the upper half of Manhattan Island and that there were six other homicide squads made up of an equivalent number of detectives to take care of the rest of the killings in New York City.

Instead, he said, "You were going to tell me about two girls in your area who were reported missing?"

"Yeah, that's right, only there ain't much to it. Was a Saturday night. If anybody's going to disappear, that's the time to expect it. Saturday night. They were out with a couple of boys, of course. So the father of one of the girls gets upset and he calls up to report them missing. Then, about fifteen minutes later, he calls back and says forget it. They aren't missing any more. What I figure is there was some trouble about the girl going with a particular boy and the father was getting tough about it, but they ironed it out." The sheriff chuckled. "Was that what you wanted to know about?"

"I guess that's it."

"Help you out much?"

"I wouldn't say so. One question, though, Sheriff. There were two girls reported missing, but he was the father of only one of them?"

"Yeah, that's right."

"But he reported not just his own daughter missing but the other girl too? If it's about his own daughter's boyfriend, why did he involve the other girl?"

"Well, he didn't, really. He told me the other girl's father would report her missing. That's why I didn't move. I was waiting for the other call. Then he called back and told me to forget it."

Frank hitched his chair closer to the desk. It wasn't promising but it was all there was. "Do you know for sure, Sheriff, that the girls showed up again?"

"I didn't see them, if that's what you mean. But it's a logical assumption. Otherwise they'd be reported missing again, right?"

"Right. Did you get a description of the girls?"

"This guy's daughter I can tell you about. Black curly hair,

cut short. Height five feet two, weight a hundred and five pounds. Wearing a black and white print dress."

"What about the other girl?"

"The one who wasn't reported missing? I didn't get anything on her."

"How old were the girls?"

"Fifteen. Going into their sophomore year in school."

It was obviously a false alarm, but the age did fit and Frank was encouraged to ask another question. "When was this report made, Sheriff?"

"Saturday night, like I said. Let's see, I got it here. August thirty-first."

Frank's heart skipped a beat. That was the night the girl died. A fifteen year old girl. He said, "Sheriff, do you know anything about a car stolen from Fairchild from a Robert Manners and recovered in New York also on August thirty-first?"

Sheriff Clock chuckled. "Sure I know about that one. Stolen on the afternoon of August thirtieth, picked up at Washington Square in New York on the afternoon of the thirty-first. Twenty-four-hour service."

"Washington Square?" Frank's heart skipped another beat. "It was found around Washington Square?"

"Yeah. Why? Is that important?"

"Do you know who stole it?"

"I can't prove nothing, but I've got a good idea. We got some hippies over in that town. They got a motorcycle gang and one of those kids stole a car once before and he's the only kid in the town ever did anything like that. So when I heard that a Fairchild man's car got stolen, right away this hippie, Jerry Fisher, becomes my prime suspect. And because the other time he stole a car it was to take a trip, I figured the same thing and I figured a guy like him would most likely light out for either Chicago or New York where all the rest of the hippies are. So I had the New York and Chicago police alerted specially and the New York police found it in the hippie area the next day which, so far as I'm concerned, says he stole it. But I can't prove it."

"Have you talked to him?"

"Jerry Fisher? No, I ain't talked to him."

"You don't know if he took any girls to New York with him?"

"You mean you think—?" Clock paused and reflected. "Now, you know, that's something. I mean, when this Mr. Mills called me up to report his daughter missing it was, like I say, a Saturday night. But I recall him telling me something about her having disappeared on Friday."

"Jesus, Sheriff, why didn't you say so before?"

"You didn't ask me. You only asked me when she was reported."

"All right, Sheriff. I should have asked you. Mills is the name of the man who made the report? He said his daughter and another girl had been missing since the day before and he gave you a description of his daughter and said the father of the other girl would report on her?"

"Yep. That's right. But instead, he called back and said to cancel. So I canceled."

"Did he tell you why he wanted the search canceled?"

"I presume because the girls came home again. Can't think of no other reason."

"But he didn't *say* that's why he was canceling the hunt?"

"No. He didn't actually say it."

"And his name is Mills? What's his daughter's name?"

"Cecily."

"What's the name of the other girl?"

"Virginia Hall."

"Would you give me their phone numbers?"

The sheriff gave him the Millses' phone but he couldn't help with the other. There were three Halls in the Fairchild phone book and he didn't know which were her folks.

"And Jerry Fisher. Let me have his address and phone."

When he got that, Frank thanked the sheriff, hung up, lifted the phone and promptly direct-dialed the Millses' home in Fairchild. It was Mr. Mills who answered and he said no, Cessie wasn't there, and what did a New York detective want with her anyway?"

"Do you know where she's gone, Mr. Mills?"

"She went to the movies with her mother. Why?"

"We're trying to determine whether she and a friend of hers, Virginia Hall, came to New York recently. August thirtieth, to be exact."

Mills' voice grew more careful. "May I ask why you want to know?"

"We're trying to find out if Virginia Hall came to New York with your daughter and, if she did, did she return to Fairchild."

"I see," Mills said slowly. "She did go. I do not believe she returned."

"She did not return?"

"I don't think so."

"You know Virginia Hall?"

"Yes. She's a good friend of my daughter."

"Would you describe her?"

"Yes. She's fifteen, she's got reddish brown hair, shoulder length. She's about five four, maybe a hundred and ten pounds, light complexion, freckles and, brownish eyes, I think."

Frank wrote it down. "And she is still in New York?"

"So far as I know, yes. I think the Halls could tell you more about that than I, though."

Frank got from him the name Arthur Hall, his address and phone. "Thank you, Mr. Mills," he said. "Thanks very much." He hung up and went into the homicide room across the way where Lenny Green, a husky, easy-going Negro detective was gabbing with Roger Donnelly, a white-haired grandfather. He clapped both men on the shoulder and said, "You want to know something? I don't think we're going to need the monsignor's cemetery plot!"

Rog said, "Frank, you're kidding!"

Lenny grinned and tilted back his chair. "You got a make on the girl at last?"

"I think we've got a make. I think we've finally got it!"

Rog said, "How come she wasn't reported?"

"You know why? Because I don't think anybody knows she's

dead." He picked up the nearest phone and started dialing the same area code again.

Lenny said, "You going to tell them?"

"I'm going to let them tell us. I'm going to get the Hall family down here to look at the body."

CHAPTER XX

At three-thirty Wednesday afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hall, accompanied by Frank Sessions and Ernie Grinold, entered the glass-walled lobby of the Medical Examiner's office and reported to the attendant at the desk. The latter made a couple of phone calls and the four sat quietly for a bit.

Peter Quent appeared and was introduced. Then Missing Persons detective Jack Hewlett joined them, and finally Dr. Lyman, in white smock and pants appeared. He took the group around the corner to the fire door and down the steps to the next level. Two other white-clad doctors were there and one pulled open the door. On the other side, a three-sided blue screen blocked a view of everything except a wheeled cart on which the girl's body lay under a clean sheet with only the head exposed.

The man and woman stared at her tight-lipped for several seconds while the doctors and detectives stood back and waited. Finally Mr. Hall said, "Don't look much like her."

His wife shook her head. "No it don't."

They studied her a bit longer and the man said, "The hair looks like her, huh, Rachel?"

"Yeah. The hair does."

The man turned. His face was stony. "I guess it's her."

The woman gasped a dry sob and fumbled in her purse for a handkerchief. The doctor closed the door. Sessions took the woman's arm and told her he was sorry.

"I don't mean to be like this," the woman said, trying to control herself. "I didn't think I cared any more."

Hewlett said to Mr. Hall, "Were you able to get her dental record?"

Hall took a folded paper from his pocket without a word and Hewlett checked it against a paper he held. Sessions and Grinold checked it too and nodded.

Mrs. Hall, dry-eyed and clutching the handkerchief, her arm still held by the detective, said, almost apologetically, as if, in the big city she wasn't sure how to behave, "Uh, did—ah—does she have—did you notice—a slight discoloration around her navel? I mean it wasn't anything, really, but it was just some kind of an identification mark I guess you'd call it."

Hewlett nodded. "Yes, Ma'am," he said. "She has it."

"There was—" She paused. "What other marks did she have, Arthur?"

"I don't know. Scar on her right shin, didn't she?"

"Yes. She had a scar."

Hewlett said, "We have her clothes. If you'd like to come upstairs and take a look—"

"Yes, please."

They returned to the upper hall beside the lobby and went into the missing persons office at the front. It was a narrow room with a couple of desks and a file cabinet by the window. Hewlett took a bundle from the deep desk drawer and opened it on the top.

When he held up the dress, Mrs. Hall swallowed and swayed momentarily. "I made that," she whispered. "That's my dress."

"It's Virginia," Mr. Hall said bleakly.

His wife sat down and he patted her shoulder. "We tried to bring her up right," he said solemnly. "We didn't mean for it to end like this."

Mrs. Hall began to weep. "She just wouldn't behave," she said. "We couldn't make her do right."

Hall said, "We couldn't put the fear of God in her. She should have learned to fear. She should have listened to her old man."

Sessions said, "Can you answer some questions?"

Hall nodded. "But I got some to ask too. Who did it to her? Was it that Nigger?"

Sessions looked at him. "What 'Nigger'?"

"The one she was living with."

He shook his head. "She wasn't living with anybody."

"But I thought—" Hall turned suddenly aggressive. "Well where the hell has she been living the last couple of weeks?"

"She's been dead, Mr. Hall. She's been dead the whole time."

"Dead?" He sagged a little. "How long? When?"

"The night of August thirty-first."

"But—but I thought she went to live with a Nigger."

"No, sir. She didn't."

"I mean—that's why we didn't look for her." Tears were in his own eyes now. "We gave up on her. We thought she was living in sin with a Nigger. And you say she was dead?"

"Yes, she was dead. Didn't you read about it? Didn't you hear about it? We've been trying all this time to find out who she was."

Hall started to sob and they helped him to a chair. He looked up at Sessions with streaming eyes. "If I'd looked for her, could I have saved her?"

"No, you couldn't. She died the night she phoned you. She was dead before you knew she wasn't coming home."

He struggled for control and murmured that that was a blessing anyway. It was better knowing she couldn't have been saved.

When he had fought down the tears and was able to answer questions, Sessions started in.

"First, would you tell us about this Negro you thought she was living with? You didn't say anything about that when I called you last night."

He sniffed and blew his nose. "Well of course not," he mumbled. "You want to know if my daughter's in New York, I got to say I think she is but I don't got to tell you what I think she's doing. Then you want me to look at a body. Naturally I expect it's going to be Ginny. I don't think you're going to call me lessen it's almost certain. So I'm prepared for that, but I'm not going to

talk about the Nigger she lived with unless I know for sure. That's not something I want people to know about my girl."

"She wasn't living with a Negro, Mr. Hall, but she *was* killed by one."

The tears started to come again and he and his wife held hands. "Why did some Nigger man want to kill my girl?"

"He was a rapist. She died trying to fight him off."

Hall blew his nose and wiped his eyes. "I warned her about boys," he said. "I told her. We both told her. All the time we said, 'Stay away from the boys.' 'They're no good,' we told her. But she wouldn't listen. Behind our backs she went out with them. I knew it would be trouble." He shook his head. "But not like this. I didn't think it was going to be like this."

Sessions said, "Do you know who this Negro was? Do you know his name?"

He shook his head. "No, I don't know nothing about him. Cessie would. She can tell you. Cessie Mills."

"Tell us what you do know. Tell it from the beginning."

Hall said, "She disobeyed me. That's how it started. And she lied. She called her mother and said she was going to stay the night with Cessie Mills and it was a lie. She and Cessie went to New York instead. With a bunch of boys."

"What were their names?"

"I don't know. Cessie wouldn't tell me. I might have made her but by then I didn't care." He patted his wife's hand. "Rachel and me thought she'd gone to live with a Nigger and we didn't care any more."

"Go on. They went to New York. How did you find out?"

"It wasn't till Saturday night. We were having supper. Gary and Ma and me, and I was thinking, 'What's Ginny doing, living over at the Millses?' I thought she ought to be home by now. She shouldn't be eating all her meals over there."

"You hadn't checked on her all that day—to see if she was really at the Millses?"

"Naw. She's there a lot of the time. We got work. We're busy. She can come and go like she pleases. We're liberal. We give her

a lot of freedom. Except we don't want her having no truck with boys. That's off-limits so far as we're concerned. But she went and saw boys behind our backs, Mr. Sessions. We didn't know nothing about that, but that's what she was doing. Despite all our warnings, she saw boys. And they talked her into going to New York with them and lying to her folks about staying at her girlfriend's house. That's how it started. She was seeing boys."

"But Saturday night you didn't know this?"

"Not till after supper. I was just starting to get sore at her not being home and thinking about having my missus call up Cessie's ma and tell Ginny to get her ass—to come home. But just then Cessie's ma calls up my missus and says the same thing to her. She wants Cessie to come home. So then we found out what I told you on the phone last night, that each girl told her folks she'd be spending the night with the other. That's how we didn't know they run away before then.

"So I talked to Mr. Mills and he wanted to report the girls missing and I wasn't sure what to do. I was worried about the scandal if it came out. I thought we should wait maybe a little longer. But he wasn't going to wait and said he was going to call the sheriff and report his daughter missing and it was up to me to report my own daughter if I didn't want him to, but he wasn't going to hide the fact that his daughter ran off with my daughter. So I told him I'd report Ginny too.

"But then, before I had a chance to do that, she called me up from New York. She said they were coming home the next day. So I called Mills back and he canceled the alarm."

He sniffed once and went on in an even voice. "So the next day she didn't come and she didn't come and finally, when it got supper time, I called up Mr. Mills to see if he'd heard anything. And darned if I don't come to find out that Cessie got home on a bus by the middle of the afternoon and she's been kept in her room ever since. So I ask about Ginny and Mills doesn't know nothing about Ginny. He hadn't talked to Cessie, he'd just sent her to her room.

"So he gets Cessie on the phone and the minute she's on, she's

in tears and she tells me Ginny met a big Nigger in New York and told the others she wasn't going to come home any more. She was going to stay in New York with him instead. She said she was going to live like a hippie with this Nigger." He looked up at Frank. "That's what Cessie told me. And I believed her. Why shouldn't I believe her? You tell me he killed her. But Cessie says they—they—liked each other."

Frank said, "That's all right. We'll be talking to Cessie. So after you got that information, you made no move to find out if that was true?"

"What could I do?"

"You didn't try to find her or make inquiries about her?"

He shook his head, bowing it low. "I believed Cessie. I thought she was living with a Nigger. I thought she had turned her face against her family. We—Rachel and me—we put her out of our minds." He looked at her. "Didn't we?"

She nodded and lowered her head. "I tried, Arthur. But sometimes—sometimes in the night—"

Sessions said, "Why did Ginny call you up from New York, Mr. Hall?"

He stirred. "She wanted money to come home on."

"What did you say to that?"

"Well, I was kindda upset." He patted his wife's hand. "Right, Rachel? Because, well, in the first place, she run away with a bunch of boys. She admitted that. She and Cessie and some boys got in a car and went to New York. Just like that. And lied to their folks in the bargain. I figure I got a right to be upset. She's fifteen, Mr. Sessions, and she does a thing like that. Crossing a state line and staying out all night with them too. There's no telling what went on."

"Then she goes and tells me what they did it for was to attend a big peace rally. They want to stop the war in Vietnam. They want our government to surrender to the Communists. Now I brought her up proper. I brought her up to be patriotic and love her country and want to serve her country, but she gets with the boys and they put wrong ideas in her head. They not only talk

her into running away from home, they talk her into going to an anti-American rally. And on top of that, the boys have blown all their dough and have the gall to get her to call *me* up to send them money to come home on."

"You refused to send them any?"

"No, no. It wasn't like that. She was fresh and rude and balky but I was a reasonable man. I told her I'd send money for her and Cessie. But I wasn't going to pay for the boys she ran off with. I think that was right, don't you?"

"Sure. That sounds right."

"I told her I'd wire her bus fare for her and Cessie to come home on and I was under the impression that's what she was going to do. I was expecting her all the next day. I was waiting for her. I wanted to see my little girl."

He was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "But she didn't come and then I got it from Cessie what she'd done and I thought it was a slap at us. I thought it was because I wouldn't send her more money. She wanted a hundred dollars, Mr. Sessions. I couldn't have sent that much money even if I wanted to. It's in the bank. I'd have had to wait till Tuesday. So I thought she was paying me back by going to live with a Nigger. That's why I didn't do nothing. I didn't know Cessie was lying."

"And you made no attempt to find the boys she went with?"

"Cessie wouldn't tell me who they were. And, like I say, I didn't see no reason for Cessie to lie. I washed my hands of it."

He was silent and then his wife spoke. "They ought to punish that girl," she murmured. She looked up at Frank. "You ought to make her tell you why she lied."

Frank nodded solemnly. "We'll be talking to her."

CHAPTER XXI

Cessie Mills, when it happened, was blissfully in the middle of mathematics in the early afternoon. It wasn't that mathematics was all that blissful for someone like Cessie—not the subject matter at any rate. What bliss there was stemmed from the fact that it was a mixed class and better than half the students were boys. That acted as something of a spur to Cessie who tried just a little harder so she wouldn't appear too much of a dud. It wasn't that boys liked smart girls. They didn't and she knew it, but appearing too smart wasn't something she had to worry about. Her concern was that she not appear too dumb. The point was that when she stood up to recite or do an example on the board, she wanted to make a good impression on the boys. She was cute looking. She knew that much. And they'd be eyeing her with ideas in mind that had nothing to do with her IQ. Her problem, therefore, was not to let the IQ, or lack of it, distract the boys from the proper disposition of their attention. In short, she didn't want to fumble or look awkward. She had to know enough so that what she said and what was said to her would not get in the way of the physical impression she wanted to make.

And then it was that a message came and she was to report to the office. Orders like that, from out of the blue, could strike fear in a student, and an expectation of punishment. But Cessie was not bothered. The idea of anybody chastising her for anything, or of her doing anything that would warrant it just didn't occur.

Cessie Mills was sufficiently free of guilt complexes for any rebuke at any time to be a total surprise.

So she went guilelessly into the principal's office and two men were there whom she not only had never seen before but who looked as if they came from places beyond Fairchild. There was nothing forbidding nor frightening about them but there was a strange bleakness in their appearance, especially in the eyes of the taller, thinner one with the brown, perfectly combed hair, the rich textured suit.

The principal who, to her, had always seemed just a little awesome, didn't match his former stature in the face of the newcomers. Though older than either, he fluttered a little. He looked birdlike and slightly overcome.

"Cessie," he said, acting as if he knew her better than he did, "these are two men from New York who want to talk to you. They are with the—ah—police department, in fact." It was as if J. Edgar Hoover had come to call and he cleared his throat. "This is Mr. Sessions—" He gave a slightly falsetto chuckle and corrected himself. "*Detective* Sessions. And this is Detective Grinold."

Detectives Sessions and Grinold did not sit her down in the outer office where children passed and where office personnel could overhear. They took her outside where the grass was green and the sun was warm. They seemed to sense what would set her most at ease—and right then she was anything but at ease. New York meant only one thing to Cessie. It meant that horrible experience she'd been trying to forget. It meant the departure of her best friend for a strange new life she didn't even want to imagine. For two and a half weeks she had tried to forget she'd ever known Ginny Hall. She'd tried to forget those hippies who were around town. She avoided their haunts and cooped herself up when they came around her brother. Now two detectives from New York had come and she knew before they opened their mouths that they were going to want to know about that weekend. She wasn't going to be able to keep that curtain in front of her memory much longer.

They walked her onto the grass and the thinner one lighted a cigarette and took deep puffs. "Nice around here," he said, noting the expanse of lawn, the greenery, the fields and trees.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell us about Ginny," he said. "She was your best friend, wasn't she?"

Her heart thumped. "How do you know about Ginny?"

"We saw her. Tell us what happened. Why did she leave you?"

"Didn't she tell you?"

The lean man with the dark brown hair and the nice clothes, shook his head. "Ginny's dead," he said. "She couldn't tell us anything."

That was the body blow. Was that the thing Cessie had feared? Had she never really believed that Ginny would run off with a man? She shook and trembled and said in frightened tones, "No. She can't be."

"She's dead," the detective said again. "We want you to tell us who killed her."

Cessie felt paralyzed. "Who killed her?"

"She went away with somebody. Who was it?"

The other detective, the younger, stockier one whose name began with G said, "Tell us what happened after she made that phone call."

It was all too overpowering. The doors of Cessie's mind could stay locked no longer. Everything came tumbling out—all about how they'd come back for the car but the car wasn't there any more. The boys couldn't report it because it was stolen. The girls didn't know that. Honest, she and Ginny wouldn't have ridden in it if they'd known it was stolen.

"Then what?"

"Then?" Then there was the phone call Ginny made to her father and how she was practically in tears at the end. He wouldn't send enough money to get them all home—only the girls.

And there was that great big colored hippie who said they couldn't get the money because Western Union was closed—

"Closed?" the detectives said. "Western Union? And you believed him?"

Yes, they believed him. Why wouldn't they? He lived in New York and what's more, he knew all the answers. He could get them LSD or whatever they wanted—speed, pot, anything. He could even get them places to sleep. His sister could put up two of them, a friend could handle the rest. So they split up. She and three of the boys went to the friend's and Ginny and the other boy went with the hippie to his sister's.

"What happened after that?"

Cessie brushed a hand over her pale forehead. "We couldn't find the address. We followed the directions but we couldn't find the street. We asked people and everything but nobody knew the address. So we ended up just wandering around almost all night and we sat in doorways and tried to keep out of people's way because we were afraid if the police found us they'd arrest us and find out we'd—they'd—that the car had been stolen."

"Go on."

"In the morning we went to Washington Square again. We were supposed to meet Ginny and Warren under the arch at nine o'clock. But they never came and we didn't know where to look for them. So finally the boys pooled all the money and they borrowed a little from a priest in the church there and bought me a bus ticket back home, and the boys, they hitch-hiked."

"Who are the boys? What were their names?"

She told the names. There was no point in hiding anything any more. Ginny was dead and stolen cars weren't anything now. Nothing was anything now. It was so horrible, all that mattered was telling everything to the police and letting them put the leftover pieces together.

The tall lean detective was solemn but he looked as though he understood. "Tell us about this Negro," he said. "The one Ginny and Warren went with. What was his name?"

"He called himself Samson."

"Samson?" It was a totally new name. "Samson who?"

"I don't know his last name. He only called himself Samson."

"What did he look like?"

Cessie was at a loss. He was bigger than any of them—even bigger than Jerry Fisher, and he had kind of long, bushy hair, but that was all she could say.

"Did he have a beard or mustache or sideburns?"

Sideburns he had, she said, but he was otherwise clean-shaven.

"Now you told Ginny's father that she decided to stay in New York and live with Samson, is that right?"

She nodded.

"Where did you get this idea?"

"From Warren."

"From Warren? When?"

"Afterwards."

"I thought you didn't see him again."

"Back here. He told my brother."

"Would you tell us about that?"

Cessie swallowed. "When I got back, my father was pretty sore, see? He made me go to my room. We didn't talk about it and he didn't know that Ginny didn't come home too. I mean I didn't tell him. I was scared to. And with him mad and all, I just kind of made like we came home together. I don't mean I actually lied, I just didn't say we hadn't. I just went to my room.

"But I knew Mr. Hall was going to want to know what happened to Ginny and I wanted to know too and I told my brother because he knew all these hippies and I asked him to find out from them what had happened. So he hung around where they hang out until they came back, only Warren wasn't with them and they didn't know any more than I did.

"But then Warren showed up and he told my brother and the others that the moment he and Samson and Ginny started off together, Ginny and Samson started getting real chummy like—I mean holding hands and pretty soon they had their arms around each other. They went on the subway and all the time on the subway they were smooching and Warren was trying to tell them not to and they didn't pay any attention to him.

"Then they got off some place up in Harlem and they started

telling him to get lost, they didn't want him around any more and he told Ginny he was responsible for bringing her back and she told him she wasn't ever coming back, that she had decided to stay in New York with Samson and become a hippie. Then when he still wouldn't leave, Samson told him to wait outside of a certain building and he and Ginny went in and they never came out again. So he went inside and he rang doorbells and nobody knew anything about Samson and they told him about this couple sneaking out the back way. So he went around looking for them half the night and he couldn't find them and he finally slept in a doorway someplace in Harlem and when he woke it was late morning and he had no money and he didn't know how to get to meet us at Washington Square so he hitchhiked home.

"And Tom—my brother—told me all that and when Mr. Hall called up my father, my father made me tell Mr. Hall."

Mr. Sessions said, "Before Ginny and Samson went off together, did they display any liking for each other?"

She shook her head. "No, sir. In fact, she wanted to go with Jerry and Jock and Paul and have me go with Warren and Samson, but I was too scared and I made her—I mean, so she went."

"This fellow Warren—and the other boys. Where would we find them?"

Cessie gestured. "Why right there. They're in school."

CHAPTER XXII

The detectives talked first to Warren Pitkin since he was the one who had spread the tale of Ginny's love affair with the big Negro. In the face of their questions he didn't hold to it long, and was soon admitting that both he and Ginny had felt frightened in the older man's presence. In fact, he conceded, if there'd been a way of getting out of it, he and Ginny would have seized the opportunity. "Ginny looked scared," Warren confessed, "and I admit I didn't feel too good myself. I didn't know where he was taking us except it was supposed to be his sister's."

Warren Pitkin, whatever else he might be, was a witness. To Frank Sessions, therefore, he was golden and the detective was the soul of compassion in his questioning. "He was big, then? Much bigger than you?"

"I came up to about here on him."

"I see. And he had bushy hair, but no beard or anything?"

"No. No beard. Sideburns. He had sideburns."

"And he said his sister would take you in?"

"Yes, sir."

"How come it was you and Ginny? How come it wasn't you and another boy?"

"He said it had to be two girls or one girl and one boy. Because of his sister. She'd be scared with two men because she was all alone. She and her little boy."

"Little boy?"

"He said she had a six-year-old boy."

Sessions looked at Grinold. "What do you think of that, Ernie?"

"Just like Samuel Eustace Brown's sister."

"Samuel—Samson? That doesn't mean anything, but I like that part about the sister with the six-year-old boy. That's not the kind of thing you make up." He turned back. "All right, Warren, do you know anything about the address? Do you know where he took you?"

Warren didn't have the faintest idea except that it was a long subway ride and they walked several blocks in an all-Negro tenement district.

"Did you notice any house numbers? Did you notice any street signs?"

He hadn't.

"You see anybody? Anybody see you?"

"Not that I remember."

"All right, he walked you around up there and then what happened?"

"Finally, in front of one of those buildings, where there were steps up to the first floor, he stopped and he told us that this was the place and he told me to wait outside while he took Ginny in and then he'd come back for me."

"And you believed him?"

"Well, yes."

Ernie said, "You didn't insist on going in with them? You didn't mind his going on ahead with Ginny and leaving you alone?"

Warren swallowed and said sure he minded. He didn't know where he was. He didn't like anything he saw. He didn't know what would happen to him if he waited around outside that building.

"You weren't worried about Ginny?"

"Well, I—" He flushed.

Sessions was understanding. "He thought Samson was going to introduce Ginny to his sister and then come back for him. Isn't that right, Warren?"

"Yes, sir."

"You believed him, in other words."

"I—yes."

"You're in a strange territory, you're with someone who knows his way around, you have no reason not to trust him. He's befriended you and promised to help. There's no reason for you not to do what he says, even if it doesn't appeal to you, right?"

"Yes, sir. I didn't know what else to do."

"So he took Ginny inside. And then what happened?"

Pitkin was very pale now. They were standing outside the school on the grass where Cessie had been interviewed, and he was smoking nervously. He said, "Well, I waited and I waited and they didn't come back. And finally, after about half an hour I guess, I went into the building and started knocking on doors and asking where Samson was. And they said nobody like that lived there and one person said they saw a colored man with a white girl cutting across the back yard—"

Sessions shook his head. "Tell it straight, kid. You don't have to be afraid."

"No, but that's what I'm trying to do."

"You heard her scream, didn't you?"

Warren shivered. He dropped his cigarette and stepped on it.

"No," he said. "I didn't hear anything."

"Warren, we've got to have the truth. It's the only way we can get the man who killed her. You know she's dead, don't you? You know she died in that building, don't you? You know he killed her, don't you?"

Warren brushed a hand across his eyes as if to remove a memory. "No," he said a little desperately. "I didn't know. I didn't hear anything. Honest."

"How long did you say you waited for them to come back?"

He was sweating. "Half an hour."

"You know she screamed, don't you?"

"No. No, I didn't hear a thing."

Sessions shook his head chidingly. "Warren, everybody for half a block around heard her screams and she wasn't in that building five minutes when she started."

Warren choked up. There were tears in his eyes and he tried

not to cry. "I didn't hear," he whispered and could get no farther.

Sessions gave him another cigarette and lighted it. "You don't have to be afraid of anything," he said. "We know what happened. You heard those screams and you got scared. You were in a strange neighborhood and you'd been left alone and you were uneasy. You're a young kid. You've never been in the big city before. And now this man has taken Ginny away and she's starting to scream and you don't know where she is and you don't know what to do. Right? You heard her and you didn't know what in the world to do."

Warren nodded. The tears were streaming down his cheeks. He'd never seen Harrisburg or Pittsburgh, let alone New York. "He was so big," he whispered. "I thought maybe it wasn't her. I thought maybe it was somebody else."

"Did she call you by name? Did she say any words?"

He shook his head. "She just kept screaming. Then she'd stop sudden and after a minute then she'd start again."

"And you were frightened and you ran?"

"I thought maybe I could find a cop. I was looking for a cop."

"O.K., you wanted to get help."

"Only I got lost. I didn't know where the place was. I didn't know where I was."

"I know, kid. And you had to say something about why she wasn't with you when you got home, so you made up a story about them ditching you."

"It was like a bad dream. I thought somebody inside would help her and maybe I could find a cop. So I started to look and I got lost. I didn't know how to find my way back. And I didn't see any cops. I didn't see anything except a few guys on the street and they were all black people and I'm white and I was the only white person and—well—well—"

"You were scared."

"I was scared. I guess I kind of panicked. It seemed like it couldn't really be happening, that you'd wake up and it'd all be over. Anyway, I ran. I just got out of there. I started for home. I didn't wait for morning or nothing. I just started heading for

home. I'd've walked the whole way if nobody'd given me any rides."

"When'd you get home?"

"About half past six in the morning. I just sneaked into the house and went to bed."

"Then what happened?"

"I slept through most of the day. I didn't get up till around four o'clock."

"What'd you tell your folks?"

"Nothing. My folks, they didn't ask no questions. They and me, we don't communicate. I do my thing and they do theirs. So I went out to see if the others had got back and they had, only Ginny wasn't with them. So I made like I'd only just got back myself and I had to have a story about why Ginny wasn't with me so I said she stayed with the colored guy. I figured that wasn't much of a lie and when she got home she'd tell it pretty much the same way." He shook his head. "I figured she wouldn't blame me for leaving her. There wasn't nothing I could have done."

"But she didn't come home."

He shook his head. "I know and I was worried. I thought she might be in a hospital or something. I didn't know what might have happened."

"You didn't look in the newspapers?"

"I don't read the papers."

"You didn't make an exception in this case?"

He shook his head uncomfortably. "I didn't want to know what happened. I wanted to pretend nothing happened at all. I kept hoping she'd be showing up one of these days."

He was Frank's witness, his case and his pal. Frank nodded understandingly. "You think you'd know this guy Samson if you saw him again?"

Warren nodded soberly. "You can bet on it."

"You think Jerry Fisher and the other kids would too?"

"They'd know him too. You can ask them, but I'm sure of it."

Sessions took out some photographs from an inside pocket and gave them to the youth. "You recognize any of these people?"

Warren sorted through a dozen of them and hesitated. "Yes," he said slowly, and then with more excitement, "Yes. That's the man. That's Samson!"

It was the mug shot of Samuel Eustace Brown.

CHAPTER XXIII

A two-car caravan made the trip back to New York. Warren Pitkin rode with Ernie Grinold, along with Jock Perkins, Paul Deckle and Paul's father. Frank rode with Cessie Mills, Jerry Fisher and Cessie's father.

The youths, it had been explained, would be put up at a small westside hotel at police expense (the parents would have to pay their own way). They would attend a police line-up, they would make statements to a district attorney. Later, if things went according to expectation, they would testify before a grand jury, a Huntley hearing and a murder trial.

The young people were booked into the hotel in the early evening, along with the two fathers, and were told to keep themselves available. The detectives went on to homicide where Sergeant Saul Remick and Detectives Cantrell, Rodriguez and Mannion were getting ready to go to the two-eight on a shooting. Frank told them he had an ID on the dead girl and a make on her killer. They were going out now to pick up the latter.

"You going to want some help?" Remick asked. "I can have Bill—"

Sessions shook his head. "Hell, no. If he's there we'll bring him in. If he isn't, we'll wait for him."

"How'd you make him?"

Frank related Warren's story of Samson's offer to bunk two people with his sister and her six-year-old son. "You figure," Frank said, "the perpetrator, when he finds out those kids have

no place to go, is going to con them with the first thing that enters his mind. And that's probably going to have some basis in fact unless it's a well-established fiction he's worked out. So Brown has a sister with a six-year-old kid. That sounded too close to be coincidence. I showed the kid a mug shot of Brown and it's like, 'Eureka.'"

"You sure Brown won't give you any trouble?"

Frank said, "He'll try but he'll chicken. I've seen him in action."

They left and rode in Grinold's car to the tenement where Samuel Eustace Brown lived with his sister and his nephew. They parked the car in front of a hydrant, locked it, climbed the stairs and knocked on the door. The time was nine thirty-seven. The corridor reeked but it was impossible to identify the combinations of odors that made up the unpleasantness.

The detectives stood and waited and knocked again. The hall was empty and silent. The building had much the same empty silent air itself for a third of the rooms were vacant. It was one of the more squalid tenements in Harlem, where the landlord did as little as possible and the superintendent did even less. It was a breeding ground for rats, but it bred people too. Sam Brown and his sister had been raised in such surroundings and now her six-year-old son was getting his indoctrination. They were being trained and conditioned and influenced in the same way as the building's non-human population.

And if one went from floor to floor and door to door, one might discover other shooting galleries—other rooms that stank with excrement but served as a repository for coked up dreams where, after you'd purchased your glassine envelope of white powder, you could retire and succumb to the euphoria the dreams provided. Once you went into the nod, the surroundings no longer mattered. You didn't know about the dirt and the smell and the rats. You didn't know about the bodies on the autopsy tables at the morgue waiting to have an OD (overdose) diagnosis confirmed.

The voice that responded to the detectives' knocks did not,

however, belong to a junkie. This was a harsh, strident, female tone bawling, "What do you want?"

Frank said, "We're the police. Open up."

"Like hell. What do you want?"

"We want to talk to Sam."

"He ain't here."

"Open the door."

"Drop dead."

Grinold said, "We know he's in there. Open up or we'll kick it in."

Frank cut in with a sneer in his voice. "Is that chicken-livered brother of yours hiding behind your skirts again?"

She called him the obscene name that was the Harlemites', the hippies' and yippies' favorite and she told him what her brother would do to him if he didn't carry a gun, but she opened the door.

She was wearing a dark blue cotton kimono which didn't exactly reveal any charms, but did reveal the fact that only charms lay underneath. She stepped aside to let Frank in. Back by the inner room was a lithe young coffee-colored man in trousers but stripped to the waist. He stared at Frank sullenly but didn't speak. The girl put her hands on her hips and said, "Satisfied? You believe he ain't here?"

Frank only shrugged. "Where'd your brother go?" he said.

"I don't know. I told you, I don't know what the hell he does. I ain't his goddam keeper."

"When's he coming back?"

"He ain't coming back. He moved to California."

"Where was he on Saturday night two and a half weeks ago?"

"He was here, you—" and she went through the usual list of obscene names. "You ain't gonna pin no rap on him. He never went out of the apartment the whole night."

Her bald-faced contradictions didn't faze her, nor did Frank bother to acknowledge them. He left the girl, went past the narrow-eyed, semi-naked man into the room beyond, throwing on the light. There was no closet and little furniture other than

the bed, and no one was under it. Frank checked the other bedroom to the right and found the little boy asleep in a crib. Sam Brown wasn't hiding.

He came out again and the girl said, "Satisfied?" and ran through the list of obscenities again.

Frank smiled at her. "That's a sweet disposition you've got there, sweetheart. I'll bet you make friends easily."

She tried to spit on him but he saw it coming and got away from most of it. Ernie Grinold was quick and grabbed her before she could do it again. Frank said, "Let her go, Ernie," but he wasn't smiling now. "All right, sister," he said. "If you want to spend the night in jail, I'll take you down there right now, kimono and all. Or you can behave yourself and stay here. It's your choice."

She called him a few more names but she didn't try to spit on him again. He took a clean handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his lapel. "Tell your brother we want to see him," he said.

"Yeah," she answered. "Sure I'll tell him."

Frank went out and Ernie, with a look behind, followed. As they got to the stairs the door slammed behind them with a mighty crash. Frank shook his head as they went down. "Jesus," he said. "A girl like her can sure try a guy's patience."

"She's a living doll, Frank. I pity the poor kid she's got."

"Motherhood," Frank answered. "It fits her like a glove."

They went outside and crossed the street to a spot a couple of doors away where they could keep out of sight and still watch the front door of the building. Unless Sam had left town, sometime that night he should approach that door.

Frank Sessions hadn't finished one cigarette, however, before something else happened. The man who had been with the sister suddenly appeared on the stoop, looked around, came quickly down the steps and started up the street.

"Looks like we spoiled his evening," Frank muttered. "You watch for Sam. I'll tail this bird." He waited till the furtive figure went well past, then stepped out onto the sidewalk and started after.

It was an easy tail despite the fact that Frank, a white man in a black neighborhood, was a conspicuous figure. The man, having missed the detectives on his one look-around, had assumed they'd gone and gave them no further thought. Frank, across the street and behind cars, had no trouble following after.

The Negro rounded the corner onto Lenox Avenue and went into the first bar. He reappeared in thirty seconds and crossed the street to try another. That got him nothing and he was out of that in no time too, going on to a third bar in the next block.

He remained inside that one for nearly five minutes and when he came out, he stopped beside the door and gave that furtive look-around again. It was a giveaway look, one that told anyone watching that he had something to hide, yet which really told *him* nothing at all. About the only thing that look would have spotted would have been a uniformed patrolman or a police radio car. He never saw Frank doing a four corner walk at the traffic lights, and he wouldn't have noticed him if he had.

After the look-around, he pulled open the door and Sam Brown came out beside him. Sam looked around too but he didn't see Frank either for the detective was behind a car now, moving in.

Sam turned with the man and started to walk. He didn't know a detective was within a mile of him.

Then Frank's hand landed heavily on his shoulder and Frank's voice in his ear said, "I've been looking for you, Sam. We're going to have a little talk."

CHAPTER XXIV

Sam Brown wheeled as if shot. For a moment his mouth hung slack; then he rallied. "What do you want?" he said, attempting a sneer.

"We want to talk to you, Sam." Frank took the big man's arm and started walking him back toward the tenement.

"So talk." Sam walked with a certain reluctance, but he didn't try to resist.

"We'll talk down at the police station." Frank turned to the other Negro. "We don't need you, Soul Brother. Blow."

The man hesitated and said to Sam, "You want me to tell your sister?"

"You don't have to tell her nothing. They ain't gonna hold me."

"See ya." The other Negro left abruptly and crossed the street.

"Did he stool on me?" Sam asked Frank.

Frank didn't answer. Sam went on, "Because if he did, there's a guy who ain't gonna have no balls. Because I'm gonna cut 'em off."

They went across Lenox and the big man spoke again. "You know you're wasting your time, don'tcha? You ain't got nothing on me."

Frank said, "We'll see."

There was no change in the man's demeanor but Frank felt a tremor shiver along his arm. They walked on in silence and Sam's lip curled. "What's it about, copper? My trip outta town?"

A few yards farther, he said, "You're wasting your time, copper, because I ain't gonna talk. I ain't gonna say nothing."

They drew near to the hiding place and Ernie stepped out. "Well, what do you know?" he said. "You have any trouble, Frank?"

"No trouble. Sam's a smart boy. Sam's going to be nice and cooperative. Aren't you, Sam?"

Sam muttered a four-letter obscenity and spit in the gutter.

They brought him over to Ernie's car and Frank got into the back seat with Sam. The black man said, "Where're we going?"

"Headquarters."

"What'm I supposed to have done?"

"We'll talk about it when we get there."

They made the trip in silence, parked in front of the two-five building and took the stairs to the second floor. Sergeant Whelan, a Negro, was in charge, and four detectives were at the desks, listening to complaints and taking statements. Half a dozen citizens, all of them black, were there to make the complaints, report troubles, or be questioned. It was twenty minutes past ten and the night was busy.

Whelan looked up when big Sam Brown arrived and he listened when Ernie took him aside to explain what they wanted to question him about. Then he showed them through his office to the small interrogation room beyond and shut the door to give them privacy.

The detectives put Sam Brown in the chair and gave him a cigarette. Frank sat on a corner of the small table, lighted Sam and lighted himself. He shook out the match and dropped it in the ashtray. "All right," he said in something that could be called friendly fashion, "you want to cooperate with us and we'll all get along fine. Right?"

Sam muttered another obscenity and looked away, at the wall behind.

"You don't want to cooperate, is that it, Sam?"

"I ain't talking. I ain't telling you nothing. I told you that before."

"You told us you didn't have anything to hide. Does that mean that was a lie?"

"I ain't got nothing to hide. I ain't done nothing."

"You ran out of town. You chickened and you ran. You aren't going to call that nothing, are you?"

"I didn't chicken about nothing. Don't you call me chicken."

"You're chicken right now. You're scared to open your mouth. You claim you haven't done anything, but you're scared to talk. Now if you *had* done something, then we could understand your being scared."

Brown stamped on his cigarette. "Listen," he snarled, "I ain't done nothing and I ain't afraid to talk. Me scared of you? That's a laugh. Ask me anything. I ain't afraid."

"All right, let me ask you this. Do you want a lawyer?"

"A lawyer? What do I want a lawyer for?"

"To protect you. If you committed a crime you want a lawyer, don't you?"

"Who says I committed a crime?"

Sessions took some four by six file cards from his inside pocket. They bore rubber-stamped printing on the back and he handed one to the black man saying, "Read this with me, Sam. Start there. 'One. You are hereby advised that you have the right to remain silent and you do not have to say anything unless you choose to do so. Do you understand?'"

Brown read it through slowly and finally nodded.

"'Two. Anything you do say may be used against you in a court of law. Do you understand?'" He got acquiescence and continued. "'Three. You have the right to have an attorney present with you during any questioning now or in the future. Four. If you cannot afford any attorney, the court will appoint one to represent you. Five. If you do not have an attorney presently available you have the right to remain silent until you have an opportunity to consult with one. Six. Do you want an attorney?'"

Sam thrust the card out to Frank again. "I told you before, I ain't done nothing."

"That's what you told me. Now I want you to tell me, do you want an attorney? Or don't you?"

"I don't want one. I don't need no attorney."

Frank put the cards back in his pocket. "So you think you're brave, huh? You think you're real tough?"

"That's right."

"And you're not afraid to answer questions?"

"I ain't afraid of nothing you want to ask."

"When's the last time you laid a white girl?"

That shook him. He stumbled uncertainly, stuttered and caught himself. "Whatcha talking about? I don't have nothing to do with white girls."

Sessions put a sneer in his voice. "You have nothing to do with white girls? You mean *they* have nothing to do with you, don't you? You wouldn't turn down white meat. The fact of the matter is they don't like you, isn't it? You got nothing to interest them."

Sam Brown snorted. "Are you kidding? I could show you what I got and you wouldn't believe it."

"Except that white girls don't like you."

"I never said that. I can have any girl I want." He snapped his fingers. "Like that. Any time."

"Including white girls?"

"You're goddam right. I said *any* girl and I mean any girl. White, black, yellow. They beg me."

Sessions said, "G'wan. You've never had a white girl."

"I've had 'em plenty of times."

"When was the last time?"

"Ah—" Sam started to wave a careless hand, then caught himself. His manner changed and doors closed. "I don't remember."

"A couple of weeks ago?"

"Maybe."

"Where'd you pick her up?"

"I don't remember."

"Washington Square, wasn't it?"

"No."

"That's the place to go, isn't it? Isn't that where the white girls are eager?"

Ernie said, "I hear they're climbing all over you down there."

Frank said, "It depends on the guy. How do you make out down there, Samson?"

"I do all right," Sam said sullenly.

"Is that the best place to go?"

"It's not bad."

"What's a better place, Samson? Can you name me one?"

"No, that's all ri—" He stopped and one flash of naked fear crossed his face. "Hey. What're you calling me Samson for?"

"That's your name, isn't it?"

"No. It's Sam. Samuel."

Ernie said, "But you call yourself Samson down around Washington Square."

"No. That ain't my name. I'm Samuel."

"Ginny called you Samson, didn't she?"

"Ginny? Who's Ginny?"

"You know. The reddish-haired kid you met down there that Saturday night."

"I don't know nothing about no Ginny."

"Young kid. She was with another girl and four fellas. You found sleeping quarters for them."

He started suddenly to sweat. "No. Not me. That mustta been somebody else. Look, I ain't gonna talk no more."

"I thought you said you weren't afraid to talk."

Ernie said, "You told us you had nothing to hide."

"I changed my mind."

Frank said, "All of a sudden you *have* something to hide?"

"No. That ain't it. I just changed my mind."

"How come you don't want to talk about Ginny?"

Ernie said, "Is it because of what happened to her?"

Frank said, "Is it because of what you did to her?"

"I didn't do nothing to her."

"You laid her, didn't you?"

"No. I never touched her."

"You take her to a shooting gallery and you don't touch her?"

Ernie said, "Didn't she want you to?"

Frank said, "She must have wanted you to or she wouldn't have gone with you. Isn't that right?"

Sam shouted, "I don't know her. You ain't gonna make me say I did."

Frank's voice was super-quiet. "Warren's in town, Sam. Did you know that?"

"Warren?"

"The guy who was with Ginny. You remember. You were going to take them to your sister's to sleep? And you took Ginny inside and he stayed outside?"

"Listen, I never did nothing. I'm telling you. I ain't talking."

"You don't remember Warren, Sam?"

"No."

"He remembers you."

Sam trembled and broke into a full sweat. "I ain't gonna talk," he croaked.

"We're going to bring him in to see you, Sam. He'd like to see you again. And you'd like to see him, wouldn't you?"

"No. I don't know what you're talking about."

"We're talking about Ginny. You remember her. You remember her and Warren."

"Listen, I didn't do nothing. If he says I did anything to her, he's lying. I never touched her. I never touched nobody. He did it. He's trying to get out of it by blaming me."

"Blaming you for what?"

"For—for—" He stopped and caught himself again. "For whatever happened."

"And what was that?"

"I don't know."

"Ginny didn't like you. Was that it?"

"I ain't gonna talk about it no more." He was almost in tears now. "They're all lying to get me in trouble. They did it to her. And now they're blaming me. Because I'm black. That's what they do. They're racists."

"What did they do to her that they're going to blame you for?"

"Beating her. Raping her. All the things. Killing her."

"Throwing her out the window?"

He wiped the sweat from his mouth and avoided admissions.

"I don't know what they did. I read it in the paper. It was in the paper—what happened to her."

Frank said, "What did you kill her for, Sam?"

Sam shook and chewed his lip and didn't speak.

"Didn't you like her, Sam?"

Ernie said, "Was it because she didn't like you?"

Frank said, "I thought you were a man, Sam. I didn't know you were yellow."

Sam wiped the sweat off his upper lip again. More was running down his cheeks. "I ain't yellow," he mumbled.

"Only a yellow-livered coward would deliberately hit a girl."

"Who says she got hit deliberate?"

"Now you aren't going to tell me you hit her by accident, are you?"

Sam looked up at Frank. "Listen, you don't understand about things. Some things—the way it happened—" He stopped and stared down at the floor.

"How did it happen? What really did happen?"

Sam wiped an arm across his wet forehead and kept staring at the floor. "I don't know. Nothing happened." He looked up. "I keep telling you. I don't know no Ginny."

"We're going to bring Warren in here, and what are you going to say then? He didn't beat the girl up and you know it, Sam."

Ernie said, "Was it self-defense, Sam? Did she try to kick you?"

Frank said, "You didn't mean to kill her, did you? It was accidental, wasn't it?"

Sam nodded and said, "I wouldn't hurt nobody."

"Did she try to fight you off? Is that it?"

Sam looked up. "Listen, I ain't yellow. I don't hit girls. I can fight anybody."

"Tell us how it happened, Sam. We understand that it was an accident, but how did it happen?"

"If I tell you, what'll happen?"

"The court will take into consideration that you're cooperating with us."

"If I tell you, can I have a lawyer?"

"Sure you can have a lawyer."

"Can I have the lawyer first?"

"If that's what you want."

"I ain't yellow. I ain't no coward. You get me a lawyer and I'll show you. I ain't no coward. I don't beat girls up less'n I have a good reason."

"What was the reason?"

"Can I have a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"Right now?"

"Do you want the lawyer first, or do you want to tell us the reason first?"

"I want the lawyer."

"Who do you want?"

"I don't know. I don't know no lawyers. But if I want one, and I don't know any, you got to get me one. And you got to pay for it. I know my rights."

"Those are your rights."

"Well, that's what I want."

The detectives walked out into the squad room and Grinold said, "We could talk him out of it, Frank. We play on his ego for five more minutes and we'll have him bragging how he killed her."

"The only trouble is he wants a lawyer."

"He doesn't know what he wants. He doesn't really want a lawyer. He wants to tell us what a big man he was—how he didn't know his own strength. He wants to confess and we ought to give him the chance."

"And what good would the confession do us once the defense attorney points out in court that we didn't get him a lawyer the minute he asked for one, and that we talked him out of it? You might as well throw it down the sewer. You'd never get it introduced in evidence."

He picked up the phone and dialed a number from a paper in his wallet. He said to Grinold, "And any confessions we get I want introduced in evidence. I'm not concerned with Sam Brown's ego. I'm only concerned with convicting the guy who killed that girl."

CHAPTER XXV

Frank's call was to the Homicide Assistant District Attorney on duty that day. The Assistant DA, whose name was Lattimer, listened to the story and said, "Did the suspect say he wasn't going to talk without a lawyer or that he might talk after consulting with one?"

"He said he would talk. Whether he actually does or not is another matter."

"That's worth a try. If he said he wouldn't, then we might as well forget it. All right, call the stenographer and I'll call the Legal Aid Society. You got anything else on him?"

"Some kids who claim they can give us a make. They can't testify as to the crime, but one of them can put him with the deceased five minutes before the assault began."

"There's the possibility, then, of proving exclusive opportunity if the suspect doesn't confess?"

"Not much possibility. But it might be enough to hold him on."

"All right, bring the witnesses in. I'll be along as soon as I can get transportation."

Sessions called the stenographer and Grinold phoned the hotel to tell the youths he'd be picking them up.

They gave Sam Brown coffee and when he wanted a smoke they gave him cigarettes, but nobody tried to talk to him and nobody kept him company. He sat alone in the interrogation room with his back to the door.

Lattimer was first on the scene. He came in a little before

eleven, a short, slight young man with dark curly hair and brisk manner. Sessions brought him in to meet the big Negro and Lattimer said to him, "Have you been treated well?"

Brown, slumped in the chair, keeping his eyes down, allowed as how he had no complaints.

"Did the detectives read you your rights?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

Lattimer took a sheet of paper from his inside pocket and read him his rights again, the rights being the same but the wording slightly different. When he got to the attorney part, Brown said again that he wanted a lawyer.

"The lawyer is on his way." He left Brown and walked out to the squad room with Sessions. "All we can do is hope," he said.

Grinold came in, met Lattimer, and said he'd brought the five kids in and they had been taken into the rec room facing the sergeant's office where, when the time came, they could view the suspect through a one-way window.

The stenographer arrived and then, at ten after the hour, the attorney to represent Sam Brown. He was a sandy-haired law school grad named Robert Verrill who stood six-three, had a slight, but aggressive slump, and very ambitious eyes. He was new in one of the New York firms and his apprenticeship included the present unpaid task of representing impecunious defendants in the first stages of their trouble. It was charity work and it was thankless because, if the case went further, more experienced hands would take over. Nevertheless, it was a challenge and Verrill was geared for challenges. He introduced himself around and was not awed by Lattimer nor intimidated by the preponderance of detectives present. He shook hands as if measuring an enemy.

"Now," he said, when the amenities were finished, "I understand I've been assigned a client."

Lattimer and the detectives deferred to the sergeant and Whelan explained it. There was the case of the white girl found in the back yard of Harlem tenements, raped and murdered. Did Mr. Verrill know about it?

Yes. He wasn't familiar with all the details but he'd heard about it.

"The man you've been asked to represent is the perpetrator of that crime."

One corner of Verrill's mouth curled. "Alleged, I think, is the term you want," he said. "Alleged perpetrator."

"Alleged perpetrator."

Verrill nodded, satisfied. "What's his name?"

"Samuel Eustace Brown."

The lawyer took some papers out of his pocket, asked the defendant's address and the location of the crime and wrote them down. He tucked the papers away. "Where's the defendant?"

"Through there." Whelan gestured. "You want to see him?"

"In a minute. Is he under arrest?"

"No."

"He's just being held for questioning then?" He looked around. "Who brought him in?"

Whelan indicated Sessions and Grinold. "These detectives."

"He know what he's being accused of?"

Whelan looked at Frank and Frank said, "He knows."

"Has he said anything?"

"Only that he'd like to consult with an attorney."

"Has he been apprised of his rights?"

"He has. By us and by Mr. Lattimer."

"And you haven't questioned him?"

"Not after he asked for a lawyer."

"Did he say anything before that?"

"He said he wanted to confess but he wanted to consult with a lawyer first."

Verrill nodded and his eyes narrowed in thought. He couldn't quite keep the smile from his lips. "Where can I talk to the accused?"

Whelan said, "How about the interrogation room?"

That was fine with Verrill and Whelan brought Sam Brown out. Brown stared sullenly around, not meeting anyone's eye. He glanced at Verrill's tie when told who he was but that was all.

Verrill didn't mind. He shook Sam's hand and took his arm, leading him through the sergeant's office into the little room. He was taller than the Negro, though less muscular, and his voice dripped with compassion. "Now I'm here to help you," he was saying as he shut the door.

They remained closeted for nearly half an hour while Sessions, Grinold and Lattimer stalked around reading the notices, passing remarks, smoking cigarettes, and watching the steady stream of complainants and occasional suspects that walked through or were brought through the gate. There was a knifing case, there was a woman whose boyfriend had gone off with her two little sons. There was the boyfriend appearing with the children and the settling of whatever the difficulty was. A drunk was brought in for trying to steal a car, there was an eighteen-year-old caught making away with a portable TV. The squad detectives were getting no rest this night.

Then the door opened and Verrill came out. Brown could be seen sitting beside the table smoking a cigarette. As for the defense attorney, he was soberly confident. "We're ready to see you now," he said. "I have warned my client not to answer any questions, of course. You may talk to him if you wish—in my presence—but it's not going to do you any good. He's not going to say anything."

Lattimer said, "We'll see. He was begging to talk before."

"That was before. Right now he's all talked out. He's got it all out of his system."

Lattimer beckoned the stenographer and all six men crowded into the room. Whelan closed the door, the stenographer set up his stenotype machine, and Verrill got around behind the others where he could catch the Negro's eye and monitor him like a stage prompter.

Lattimer went through the formalities of dictating the names of those present, then started in. "Sam, you said you wanted to talk to us. Is that right?"

Sam shook his head. "I changed my mind."

"Sam, we want you to tell us about the girl you threw over the fire escape. You remember that girl?"

Sam looked at Verrill who shook his head. "I ain't talking," he said. "On advice of counsel."

Lattimer said, "You know we've got witnesses, don't you? We can place you at the scene of the crime. You know that, don't you?"

Brown didn't look at Verrill this time. He was gaining confidence. "I ain't talking," he said more strongly. "On advice of counsel."

"Do you want to talk in front of the grand jury instead?"

"I ain't talking on advice of counsel."

Lattimer straightened, looked at Sessions and Grinold tight-lipped. He turned to Verrill and said, "All right, we're through with the questions." He signalled the stenographer and stalked out.

The others followed, and Verrill, who stopped to whisper into the Negro's ear and pat his shoulder, came last. He went over to the district attorney and said, "You have anything else?"

Lattimer said, "We have witnesses. We want him in a lineup."

"Are the witnesses here?"

"They're waiting in another room."

"All right, go ahead. But remember, everybody in the lineup has to be around his age, size and coloring."

Lattimer said sourly, "Don't worry, we know how to conduct a lineup."

Whelan took charge of that and Lattimer, Sessions and Grinold went around to the hall door into the rec room. Cessie Mills was there, with Jerry Fisher, Paul Deckle, Jock Perkins and Warren Pitkin. They were grouped in the small area, drinking Cokes, smoking and watching television under the friendly, but watchful eye of a detective.

Lattimer was introduced and he told them the procedure. "In a little while you're going to see a lineup. We'll take you outside, turn the lights off here, open the panel on this door and bring you in one at a time to look through a one-way mirror into the next

room. Some men are going to be in that room, standing around so that you can see them. You are to tell us whether you've ever seen any of them before and, if so, under what circumstances."

There was a wait of about half an hour and then they were ready. Cessie, Jerry and Paul were shepherded into the hall, the lights were doused and the panel opened. Sessions, Lattimer and Grinold took Warren over and let him look through the glass into the sergeant's office beyond.

The door to the squad room was on the right and through that door, six people came. One was Sergeant Whelan without his gun or necktie. Another was one of the squad detectives who was also a Negro. There was a Negro patrolman from downstairs, dressed in streetclothes. There was Sam Brown and there were two Negro civilians who fitted the requirements and had been asked to help out. They marched in in a line and spread out opposite the glass pane, standing side by side quietly and without talking.

A detective came in with a Polaroid and took their picture while, in the darkened room behind the glass, Warren Pitkin watched and the three men with him waited. There was silence and the silence grew. Lattimer said, "How about it? Do any of those men look familiar?"

Pitkin didn't answer. He peered still harder through the glass.

Sessions clapped him on the shoulder. "Relax, Warren. Take your time."

There was more silence. Finally Grinold said, "Look sharp, kid. Do you see the man who called himself Samson out there?"

Warren Pitkin, a worried tone in his voice, said, "I'm not sure. I just don't know."

Frank's voice took on an edge. "You claimed you'd have no trouble recognizing the man."

"I know."

"You picked out his picture. I showed you pictures and you picked his out."

Warren said plaintively, "But he had thick, bushy hair. These people don't."

"Is that all you went on—somebody with bushy hair?"

"Well—" Warren was very nervous. "You got to remember it was dark."

"Dark? What the hell do you mean dark?"

"I mean the night."

"You rode on the subway with him. It was light on the subway, wasn't it?"

"Yes. I suppose so."

"You looked at him, didn't you?"

"Yes. I suppose so."

"So—what did you see? Can you tell me that one of the people out there is Samson, or can you tell me none of them are?"

Warren Pitkin said helplessly, "I don't know."

"Jesus. What are you talking about? You heard Virginia scream. I should think that face would be burned in your memory forever."

Pitkin said, "But he had bushy hair. These people don't."

"Pretend they do. Think about it and visualize them."

He tried and there was another nervous silence. Frank lighted a cigarette and controlled himself. "Take it easy," he said gently. "Think very carefully."

Warren tried. He thought—just possibly, that is—that the one on the far left just might be the man, but it could also be the second from the right.

"That's no good, Warren. You don't just guess. You have to know."

Warren was close to tears. He said helplessly, "I just can't tell the difference. All the Negroes look alike to me. They're all alike."

They sent him outside and brought in Jock, Cessie, Paul and Jerry, one by one. The lineup was rearranged each time but it didn't matter. None of them had any idea whether Samson was present or not.

When the last one confessed that he couldn't tell the difference, they closed the panel and turned on the lights. Lattimer said in a cold voice, "So all Negroes look alike. That's just fine."

And, of course, Frank, you don't have anything else—physical evidence or anything?"

"No."

"Which means there's nothing to make an arrest on and I'm wasting my time here, right?"

"I'm afraid that's right."

"So if you'll excuse me, I'm not going to waste any more time." Lattimer went back to the squad room, told Verrill there was no case, beckoned the stenographer to come along, and went down to the precinct desk to get transportation home.

CHAPTER XXVI

Ernie Grinold took the youths back to the hotel, but not with Frank Sessions. They could drop dead for all of Frank. He returned to the squad room, which had settled down after the lineup. Sam Brown was back sitting alone in the interrogation room, Whelan was talking to one of the detectives, and Verrill, leaning against the squad room fence, surveyed the scene. He looked well pleased.

Frank came through the gate ignoring the lawyer. He stuffed a cigarette in his mouth and held it when Whelan came over to light him. Frank blew out a thick cloud of smoke and swore. "How lucky can some bastards get!"

Whelan shook his head. "I hear it's all because of a haircut."

"Those goddam punks. Jesus. They're raised in some square-head town where they've seen maybe one Negro in their whole goddam life. And when you show them more than one at a time, they can't tell the goddam difference. It's not the haircut. You could put the same wig on each of those guys and march them through and those kids would think it was the same guy coming back each time."

"Well, you couldn't have anticipated that."

"I should have. I had a case like that back in the sixteenth. A Chinese laundry got robbed and the old chink who ran the place couldn't give me any kind of description of the perpetrators except to say they were white. Finally I got it out of him that he

couldn't tell the difference. To him all white people looked alike."

"Yeah. I guess it's like that."

"That's right. It's just like that. And there goes our identification. And that son of a bitch, Brown, goes free."

Verrill, who'd been listening, stepped forward. "Excuse me, but that's where you're wrong," he said. "You wouldn't have a case against Brown even if your witnesses did identify him. What if they did see him take the girl up to Harlem? What if they even saw him enter the building with her? That doesn't prove he killed her. Unless you've got eye-witnesses or can prove exclusive opportunity, you don't have a case. You couldn't get an indictment against him with all the identifications in the world."

Frank said, "But we could hold him. And all we'd have to do is get that guy up on a witness stand just once and any prosecutor would have him spilling his guts inside of two minutes."

Verrill said scornfully, "You must think I'm dumb or something. Do you think I, or any other intelligent lawyer, would let that stupid sex-machine take the witness stand in his own defense? Not in a million years."

"Why?"

"For just the reason you gave. Why, the moment I sat down with him I saw that anybody with two cents worth of psychology could open him up like a can of beans. All you have to do is prick his ego and he'll bare his soul trying to get his manhood back." He curled his lip. "Hell, even you people worked it on him. You had him so primed to talk, if I hadn't come along, he'd be blabbing his head off to Lattimer right now. So forget the witness stand. Brown's taking the Fifth. That, I promise you."

"God damn it, that son of a bitch spilled his guts in your lap and that means you know just as well as I know that he raped and killed that girl. And you're trying to get him off free."

"Of course I'm trying to get him off free. What do you think my job is?"

"I know what your job is. Win cases. Set the criminals free and get rich."

"So what's wrong with making money?"

"Nothing. It's how you make it."

"Yeah? And what's so holy about the way you make yours?"

"Not a thing, except I'd rather make it locking them up than letting them out."

Verrill said heatedly, "Listen, there's nothing wrong with defending criminals. Somebody's got to do it." He paused. "Besides, what difference does it make? It's not my fault if the only thing you can get him on is his own confession. And suppose he did confess. What would that get you? You want to kill him because he killed that girl. You want to see him die. But you can't. New York doesn't have capital punishment any more. So what have you got left? Life imprisonment? What's that? Twenty years at the most. Even if you did put him away he'd be out before you knew it."

"At least he wouldn't be raping any more girls."

"Go on, he'd still have plenty of sex drive left. I'd bet you money."

Sessions said, "Stop rationalizing yourself. It's not a question of how much he'd have left. At least he'd go to jail. You're fixing to get that son of a bitch off without so much as a slap on the wrist for committing a murder. You know he did it and you want him to go free."

Verrill raised a disclaiming hand. "Not I, no sir. Don't blame it on me. I'm not involved in this at all."

"You're the one who's getting him off."

"Uh, uh. Not I. I'm only doing a job. Society's to blame. You want someone to blame? Blame Society. It's Society that's getting him off. Society makes the laws and Society makes the loopholes in the laws. I'm just an agent for Society. I'm only carrying out the will of Society. You can't blame me for doing the best I can for my client, can you?"

Sessions' mouth tightened. "That's slick talk, kid. You'll make a million defending the Sam Browns of this world. But maybe you don't have a fifteen-year-old sister. Remember, Mister Hotshot. He killed that girl."

Verrill shrugged and said, "Let's hope he doesn't do it again."

CHAPTER XXVII

Frank Sessions walked away. He went over to the windows, lighted another cigarette and stared into the blackness. Verrill watched him, sniffed and turned to Whelan. "Sergeant, is there anything else you want with my client?"

Whelan said, "There's a lot I want with your client, but there's nothing I can do about it."

"Then he's free to go?"

"Yeah. He's free to go."

Verrill nodded. He went through to the room where Sam Brown still sat staring at the floor. Sessions turned from the window to watch.

"Hey, Sam," Verrill said, beckoning to the Negro youth. "You ready to go home now?"

Sam turned and stood up. He came forward uncertainly. "You mean it? I can go home?"

"Sure you can go home. Any time you like."

Sam came with him to the door of the squad room and gestured at the detectives. "You mean—they ain't gonna do nothing to me?"

"They can't do a thing to you. Just keep your trap shut and you're free. There's not a thing they can do."

"You're not stringing me, man?"

Verrill put a hand around the man's shoulders. "Cross my heart, Sam. They can't touch you."

A slow smile crossed the Negro's features. It increased in in-

solence as he looked from detective to detective. His shoulders straightened and his walk grew in arrogance as he followed Ver-rill to the gate. When he went out the door it was a swagger.

Frank Sessions smashed his fist into the metal office partition so hard he made it resound. He swore blue obscenities and flexed his bruised knuckles.

Whelan said, "Easy, Frank. You can't win 'em all."

"But that one I wanted. That's one son of a bitch I really wanted to nail."

Whelan clapped him on the shoulder. "Don't give up hope. He might brag to friends how he got away with murder and if the friends can be persuaded to talk, we've got him."

"Forget it. He's a clam and he hasn't got any friends."

"He'll be in here again."

"Sure he will," Frank said bitterly. "He'll kill another girl one of these days. And another after that. We'd be better off if we'd never brought him in at all than let him strut out of here the way he did. He'd be scared then. Now he feels he's safe. Now he figures he's got *carte blanche* with us poor bastards sitting on the sidelines with our hands tied." He took a deep drag on his cigarette. "Jesus, what am I doing in this lousy job? You work your balls off and for what? Another open case and another black eye. I can hear the editorial writers saying, 'Look at those stupid cops. A brutal assault case. Rape and murder! And the cops can't solve it.'"

"So you forget it. You go out and get yourself drunk. Or find yourself a broad."

"A broad?" Frank snorted. "I couldn't even look at a broad to-night without seeing
I've been
this

Whelan said, "Don't blame the police department, Frank. It's not the department that let us down."

"I know it. It's the society. It's like Verrill said. That's the way the society wants it. A little fifteen-year-old girl is dead and she ought to be alive. A twenty-four-year-old sex maniac is alive and he ought to be dead. But society wants it the other way around. Save the guilty and kill the innocent. So if that's what the people want, what the hell am I knocking myself out trying to do a job for?"

"Because you think that some day the pendulum is going to swing back the other way."

"Not in the time I've got left it won't. I'm not that much of a boob optimist. You know, if I'm smart, I'll coast through the rest of my time. Go out, look at the DOA, put on a little show—make it look good for downtown, and then throw up my hands. Too bad. Another open case. Another killer escapes. That's how I ought to handle it."

"Maybe you ought to, Frank, but you won't."

"Don't be too goddam sure, Whelan."

The sergeant laughed. "You'll catch another homicide in a few more days and you'll go at it twenty hours at a stretch the way you always do. You can't help it, Frank. It's the way you're made."

Sessions grimaced and shook his head. "The trouble is you read me, you bastard. You're right and I know it. I'll keep right on beating my stupid head against a wall." He laughed harshly. "And what a God damned cross that is to have to bear." He mashed out his cigarette hard.

"Jesus!"

